



THE
HIGHER CRITICISM CROSS-EXAMINED

F. D. STOREY

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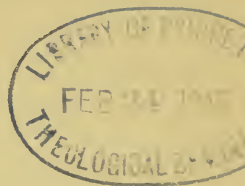


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THE HIGHER CRITICISM CROSS-EXAMINED



An Appeal and a Warning

BY
FREDERICK DAVIS STOREY

PROVE ALL THINGS—St. Paul

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To

MY WIFE

WHO HAS EVER BEEN TO ME

A WISE COUNSELOR

AN INCARNATE CONSCIENCE

AND AN UNFAILING INSPIRATION

PREFACE

THIS book is precisely what it purports to be—an appeal to ordinary Christians by one of them from their own standpoint, namely, that of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures as the only authoritative record of the revelation of God to men. The writer expressly disavows any pretensions to scholarship, or to the possession of any knowledge as an expert in any department of biblical criticism. He does not claim to meet the critics on their own ground; nor does he hope to present any considerations which they will deem worthy of notice. His aim is a much more modest one—simply to call the attention of Christians of thoughtful mind to the results which, in his judgment, must necessarily follow the acceptance of critical theories as to the nature of the only account of the facts upon which our faith is based, and to the kind of reasons adduced by the critics in support of a position which seems to him absolutely to preclude the possibility of any revelation at all.

For a long time past he had been perplexed and

oppressed by the open skepticism and the confident tone of the "Christian critics" in their treatment of the foundations of the Christian faith. A year or two since, a serious accident confined him to his home for many months. This period of enforced inaction he occupied in a careful and painstaking examination of the critical case, so far as the same had been done into English. The following pages set forth the impressions thereby made upon his mind; and as such he offers them for the consideration of those believers who are still willing to follow the light of revelation, rather than the *ignis fatuus* of speculative criticism.

The writer's thanks are due to several friends: To the Rev. G. H. Charles, of Philadelphia, Pa., the Rev. D. D. Munro, of East Orange, N. J., and the Rev. C. W. Skemp, of Eccles, Manchester, for many years secretary of Rawdon College, England, who have kindly read and commented on his manuscript; and to Mr. B. H. Doane, of the New York bar, for much valuable assistance in the way of suggestion during the progress of the work.

He would especially express his obligations to his friend, the Rev. M. H. Pogson, D. D., of New York, a stalwart defender of the old faith, but for whose warm encouragement and dogged insistence this book, such as it is, would never have been completed.

F. D. S.

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I

CRITICISM AND THE CHURCH

Inspirer of the ancient seers

Who wrote from thee the sacred page,
The same through all succeeding years,
To us in our degenerate age
The spirit of thy word impart,
And breathe the life into our heart.

While now thine oracles we read

With earnest prayer and strong desire,
O let thy Spirit from thee proceed,
Our souls to awaken and inspire;
Our weakness help, our darkness chase,
And guide us by the light of grace.

Whene'er in error's paths we rove,

The living God through sin forsake,
Our conscience by thy word reprove.

Convince and bring the wanderers back,
Deep wounded by thy Spirit's sword,
And then by Gilead's balm restored.

The sacred lessons of thy grace,

Transmitted through thy word, repeat,
And train us up in all thy ways,
To make us in thy will complete,
To teach, convince, correct, reprove,
And build us up in holiest love.

—*Charles Wesley.*

I

CRITICISM AND THE CHURCH

Seemeth it a small matter unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but you must foul the residue with your feet?

—*Ezekiel. 34: 15.*

THE success which has in recent years attended the introduction and propagation of that system of biblical exposition known as the "higher criticism," is to many Christians one of the saddest and most portentous signs of the times. Its aims are so frankly destructive of every element of the supernatural in religion, its methods and many of its exponents are so lacking in common respect for a book which has for long ages past been held in the highest reverence by Jew and Christian alike, and its logical consequences are so wide-reaching and attack at so many vital points the authority of the Bible and the foundations of the Christian system, nay, the very possibility of revelation itself, that one is simply amazed at the indifferent attitude, if indeed one may not call it acquiescent, of the church of Christ toward its theories and its other extravagancies.

Assaults upon the Bible are not new. Whenever an authentic word of God has been promulgated, the sons of Jehudi with their mutilating penknives have not been far distant. Denials of supernatural intervention in human affairs, of a divinely guided and controlled history, and of the self-revelation of God to men are not confined to the present age. Instances may be found in the first century, as in the twentieth; and when they proceed from the lips of avowed skeptics, men who sit in the seat of the scornful, they occasion no surprise. It is just what might be expected. But it is matter of wonder to find essentially anti-Christian attacks upon the trustworthiness, and even upon the common honesty, of the word of God, aided and abetted by priests of a great historic church, who by their ordination vows are committed to an unfeigned belief in all the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and, by subscription to its articles, are pledged to their defense as the written word of God. And the same wonder may be expressed in regard to an important section of the ministry in the other great evangelical denominations.

In view of this aspect of the case, the general body of believers might be warranted in the charge that the Christian faith is being wounded in the house of its friends. For, although these Christian critics may claim, after all their dissections

and demolitions, to preserve unimpaired their reverence for God's word and their loyalty to its authority, it is difficult to see how they can do it; and the plain man with his contempt for hairsplitting, demands "straight talk," and is apt to characterize by a harsh name ambiguities and mental reservations, no matter how dexterous in statement or fair-seeming in intention they may be. A plain "Yes," or a plain "No," he understands; but a "Yes-and-no" deliverance, when once he grasps its bearings, will meet with scant courtesy and short shrift at his hands. He is more than likely to wash his hands of the whole matter as something too dubious for him to concern himself about.

It must be admitted that the astonishing vogue of the higher criticism, and the supine acceptance by the Protestant Christian world of its subversive dogmas, seem to point to a precedent condition of decadent spiritual life in the church. When an organism is in a state of robust health, and its vital processes are in lively and vigorous exercise, there is a strong probability that the intrusion of any virus into the system will be rendered innocuous by the operation of the resistive forces uniting to repel the invader; while the same organism in a low and impaired condition, and with the pulses of life beating feebly, will fall an easy prey to the inroads of disease. A church with a vivid apprehension of spiritual truth and an experimental

knowledge of divine things, verified in all the vicissitudes of life by the continuing testimony of the abiding Spirit, possesses an antiseptic against all poisons. It has an infallible touchstone by which to discern in any new presentation its harmony with saving truth, or the reverse. It says: "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because they have no light in them"; and it would on the instant meet the masked approaches of infidelity, under whatever guise, with the rebuke: "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offense unto me, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." While to the same church, honeycombed with worldliness and stupefied by indifference with its resultant dimness of spiritual vision, any vagary, so it be clothed in specious garb, will suffice to beguile it from the simplicity of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Half a century since, in the days of the great revival of 1857, when the power of God in the salvation of men was made mightily manifest on this continent, when the eternal realities of religion spoke to men's inmost souls, and were of the very warp and woof of their spiritual being, any such insidious attempt to undermine their faith in the authority and divinity of the sacred records as has been witnessed in these last days, would have been at once recognized in its true character.

To-day its most radical exponents and champions are teachers of the teachers, sitting in the high seats of the synagogues, loaded down with all manner of incongruous and misdescriptive academic and ecclesiastical honors and degrees ; while their half-fledged disciples, fearing to be thought uncultured traditionalists, eager to be abreast of "modern thought," and to be classed as "new theologians" are, after a clumsy and halting fashion, following as close behind as their limitations will admit, holding up to their flocks the glories of evolution and "the survival of the fittest"—a motto which, by the way, bears a curious family resemblance to that other : "Every man for himself, and devil take the hindmost."

The condition indicated is at once a cause and an effect—an effect of indifference, and a cause of more indifference. It owed its entrance to a faith weakened by worldliness ; it signalizes its continuance by the spread of a practical unbelief amounting almost to bald materialism. We read often enough, in the pages of our religious periodicals, of laments over the decay of vital godliness and the impotence of the church in reaching the masses, and of anxious inquiries into the cause of the defection. One cause, at any rate, ought not to be far to seek. For while complex phenomena of this sort can never be attributed to the operation of one sole and exclusive cause, still it would

seem to be beyond question that the absolute reversal of received views as to the composition and character of the Scriptures must of necessity be profoundly influential in unsettling the faith of many, and thereby lowering the tone and standards of the Christian life, and loosening the exacting demands and obligations of a high spiritual experience. Indeed, some of the leaders of the new thought seem to recognize this, for they seek to console us with the assurance that this is a mere temporary phase of doubt, incident to and inseparable from a time of flux and change; that it will in the end work itself clear, and things be all the better for it. One is tempted to ask: "What, in the meantime, of the thousands who, by the upheavals and uncertainties of this transition period, have been led away after strange gods?" No Christian doubts for a moment the ultimate triumph of the truth as it is in Jesus; but that triumph will be sorry comfort for the multitudes who, following these new guides, have erred from the faith and have been given over to strong delusion to believe a lie.

Of course, those critics who, with sublime indifference to logical consistency, still claim the Christian name and profess the Christian faith, strenuously protest against the thought that the discrediting of the Old Testament in any way affects the stability of the foundations of our belief

in the New. But that kind of casuistry which assents to the premises while seeking to avoid the force of the conclusion is little understood and less liked by the common people ; and when men essay to prove that the statements of the Bible cannot lay claim even to the ordinary veracity which obtains between man and man in their mutual dealings, and yet maintain that its value as an exposition of divine truth is in nowise impaired, the honest man is apt to say : “ I take the liberty of differing with you ; and if you act as you think, I should prefer to deal with you at arm’s length.”

Attacks upon the Bible by declared atheists, as before suggested, are to be looked for, and do little harm. The Christian is forewarned by the source whence they come, and is thereby forearmed against them—usually ignoring them altogether, regarding their perusal as a misuse of time. But when they emanate from reverend fathers in God, authorized teachers and defenders of the faith—not obscure nonentities, but men of high place and prominence in the church—he may be excused if he views them with much bewilderment and with some misgivings. He looks with wonder upon propositions advanced by these clerics equaling in derogatory significance the utterances of Paine, or Hume, or Hobbes of Malmesbury, and he says : “ If this were written by Colonel Ingersoll, it would be intelligible ; but coming from men with

‘Reverend’ before their names and ‘D. D.’ after them, what am I to think?”

For let no one doubt that the Christian is thinking on these subjects. He is thinking, and thinking hard, thousands of him; and some day his thinking will become articulate and vocal—with results. He is not an expert linguist, nor a skilled theologian, nor a trained logician even; but nevertheless he has a logic of his own, the stubborn logic of facts, and he acts upon it. He can detect anomalies when he sees them, whether they be in statute books or in coats and trousers; and, in the long run, he does not follow anomalies, except in the way of pursuit, and then only with the fixed purpose of abolishing them.

Many believers whose ideals and standards had their foundation in the teachings of an earlier and simpler generation, are of the settled conviction that the church has fallen on evil days—days of a decline in power and of the eclipse of faith. And while they are not unmindful of the warning of Solomon (or Qoheleth, as the case may be), “Say not thou, Why is it that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this”; they nevertheless conceive that the facts are too patent to be gainsaid. On the one side, they see a decided halt in the numerical increase of the church, a lack of old-time love for its assemblies and its worship, a marked decline in

old-time religious fervor, and an almost total relaxation of its hold upon the masses; and on the other, the disintegrating processes of the higher criticism in active exercise, deleting from the record promises of infinite import, dissolving into thin air patriarchs and heroes and exemplars of the faith, and changing the face of Israel's history until not one sign or token of divine guidance or divine purpose remains, leaving a ruin where once the tabernacle of the Presence stood. And although it is possible that these may be mere haphazard coincidences without nexus or interdependence, they believe that an intimate causal relation exists between these two sets of phenomena, and that the first is inexplicable except as the result of the second; which belief the present writer is free to affirm that he shares with them.

II

CRITICISM IN THE OPEN

The Bible is in every one's hands. The critic has no other Bible than the public. He does not profess to have any additional documents inaccessible to the laity. Nor does he profess to find anything in his Bible which the ordinary reader may not find.

—*A. Kuenen.*

Wellhausen's "*Prolegomena*" gives the English reader for the first time an opportunity to form his own conclusions on questions which are within the scope of any one who reads the English Bible carefully, and is able to think clearly, and without prejudice, about its contents.

—*Robertson Smith.*

For which the "English reader" ought to be duly thankful, even though he may be of opinion that that same opportunity has been open to every one of the class named ever since the Bible was first translated into his mother tongue.

II

CRITICISM IN THE OPEN

The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.

—Isaiah. 35: 8.

THERE was a time, not many years since, when the battle of the books was being waged behind closed doors. The discussions of the pundits engaged in the conduct of the controversy in question were, perforce, had in executive session, and for a long period only faint and indistinct rumors of the conflict reached the ears of the outside Christian world. The position was taken that the nature of the problem was such that only adepts in Hebrew, Oriental archæology, and kindred branches of learning had any right to be heard, either *pro* or *contra*, in regard to the processes and investigations to be pursued, or to the conclusions deducible therefrom; and, indeed, that they alone were capable of understanding the problem when stated, the process when detailed, and the conclusion when reached. And, so far as the preliminary discussions were concerned, depending as they did upon technical questions, there was much force in this claim.

But in the heat of the dispute one important fact seems to have been lost sight of, wholly on the critical side and partly on the conservative, and that is that "the whole congregation of Christian people" are necessary parties, with vital and inalienable rights and interests in the subject-matter of the controversy, which can neither be waived by themselves nor overridden by others; and that sooner or later it must be referred to them in such wise that no representative character on the part of the experts can either take from them the right or relieve them of the burden of rendering a decision upon the merits. Not as to whether the Bible is the veritable word of God. That question is not an open one. It stands adjudged by the history of nineteen Christian centuries. But as to whether this long-adjudicated issue shall be reopened at the bidding of a band of German rationalists and their English and American echoes. To what end? That this priceless heritage of immemorial ages may be broken to pieces, and the church of the living God be persuaded to accept in its place as salvage from the wreck a secular history of Israel, reconstructed along the lines of the Darwinian hypothesis and the evolutionary philosophy generally. Sane men do not ordinarily part with a valuable inheritance on such terms.

It is to be hoped that the day is not far distant

when the church will awake from its slumber and will pass upon the claims of the critics, not formally or simultaneously, perhaps, but none the less effectually and finally. Already the matter has passed beyond the limits of the esoteric and the recondite. Criticism has come out into the open, so that those who will may measure its dimensions, may see what it is with the light of publicity shining upon it, and may judge whether it is a living force with the elements of permanency in it, or only a simulacrum which the wind driveth away. And, as Doctor Johnston has shown with admirable clearness in the opening chapter of his recent work,¹ the average man is a most important factor in the solution of this problem. Sir Robert Anderson, indeed, argues with great force that the specialist, with his expert knowledge of one phase of the subject and his inevitable theory to support, is actually put at a disadvantage in reaching an impartial judgment upon the matter as an entirety.²

But that is, of course, mere heresy. The idea that any one, other than an expert Hebraist, should venture to dissent from their conclusions, which are claimed to depend upon the date and analysis of ancient Hebrew documents, is one which the critics would view with lofty scorn.

¹ "Bible Criticism and the Average Man," p. 1 f.

² "Bible and Modern Criticism," "Pseudo-Criticism."

Would they admit that the non-expert is under any circumstances competent to agree with them? If not, why would it not be advisable for them to avoid the vernacular altogether and conduct their discussions in the original tongues, and so effectually exclude the vulgar from meddling with matters too high for them?

Be that as it may, it is deemed, the critics to the contrary notwithstanding, that one of the rank and file who claims to possess the ability of the ordinary man to follow a train of reasoning when it is put into intelligible English and to draw valid inferences therefrom, but who makes and can make no pretensions to scholarship of any sort, is nevertheless warranted in entertaining decided views on the invalid methods and the baneful tendencies of the higher criticism, and that he may without undue presumption, offer some comments thereon from the Christian standpoint in attempted application of those common-sense principles of reasoning which prudent men bring to bear on the hard facts of life, and on which they are willing to base their action and stake their material welfare.

At the outset it may not be out of place to make some preliminary observations.

1. It seems unfortunate, from the standpoint mentioned, that this study should have received the name it bears, and that its exponents, or at least those among them who still profess to be

Christians, should arrogate to themselves the title "critic." The term has such sinister connotations that its application to believers as descriptive of their dealings with and comments on the word of God might well be avoided, unless under the compulsion of absolute necessity, if for no other reason, in deference to universal Christian sentiment.

It may be objected that this is a mere quibble upon a word of well-understood meaning and long-established usage. But words are things and names are powers, and phrases are arguments exerting an influence far weightier than their bare etymological significance would carry. Even in its primary meaning of "one who sits in judgment" the word denotes an attitude natural, it may be, in those who reject the authority of the Lord Jesus and spurn his claims to headship, but which ill befits a Christian teacher who, although a searcher and an interpreter, is surely not a judge.¹ Judges, whether of courts or of cattle shows, are usually chosen in a regular way by some competent authority, and in the case first mentioned the exercise of their judicial functions is hedged about by precise rule and precept in order that their decisions may be based on the principles of the law of which they are interpreters, and not on the mere arbitrary dictates of a wandering fancy. Outside the ranks of the higher criticism

¹ Wace, "Bible and Modern Investigation," p. 73.

the only judge who elects himself and has an absolutely free hand is Lynch, J. And he, with his fine contempt for the rules of evidence, together with his preternatural sagacity in detecting a horse thief, presents quite a striking parallel to some latter-day critics who, bound by no principle of law or logic can, with like superhuman insight, identify six words of the Levitical forger imbedded in a narrative antedating by half a millennium the institution of the priesthood.

But it has come to pass that in general use its secondary meaning of "faultfinder" has overshadowed the etymology of the word "critic," and when one hears that some production or other is to be criticised, he expects that it is going to be picked to pieces. Usually he is not disappointed, and the higher the critics are the more likelihood is there that his expectations will be realized. As, witness their treatment of the Pentateuch, which they have literally "picked to pieces."

And that it is under this latter category that the critics themselves desire to come is evidenced plainly enough by their own declarations. No man, however profound his scholarship or keen his literary or historical insight may be, can lay claim to the title "critic," if he entertains the old views concerning the nature and authority of the Bible.¹ And when the origin and history of the

¹ Sinker, "Higher Criticism," pp. 2, 3, 83.

movement are considered, no good reason is apparent why any Christian should care to assert such a claim. Eichhorn, the originator of the phrase, as he was the pioneer in the study of the higher criticism, was, as Ewald says, one to whom the Bible, from the religious view-point, was throughout a sealed book.¹ His chief permanent contribution to the scheme seems to have been a determined effort to eliminate the supernatural from both the Old and New Testaments.² And the subsequent history of the school shows how completely it has fulfilled the promise of its youth; for, amid all the kaleidoscopic forms and shifting phases which criticism has assumed during the last century, it has been consistently true to this central canon of interpretation, until to-day the question is not whether the Bible is divinely inspired and an authentic record of divine guidance and divine intervention, but whether it is worthy of credence at all, or is merely a mixture of myth and marvel, fraud and fable, with here and there a grain of historical wheat hidden in the vast heap of traditional chaff. Hostile it has been from the beginning and hostile it will remain to the end; and when so-called Christian teachers range themselves under its banner, they raise presumptions against their own fealty which call for evidence

¹ Urquhart, "Insp. and Accuracy of Scrip.," p. 207.

² "Encycl. Brit.," Vol. VII., p. 789.

in rebuttal, and which one day the Christian world may require at their hands, and, if at all, accept their loyalty as demonstrated at the expense of their logic.

2. The assumption of the critic to act in so many diverse, not to say incompatible capacities, is one which is surely open to serious question, if not to absolute ridicule. He is, first of all, an expert, a specialist in his own line—usually a man with a theory to support. His place is the witness box, and it is his to testify to the facts; and those who have been in any degree familiar with the course of legal procedure in recent years will know that of all classes of evidence expert testimony is regarded by the courts as least trustworthy, as most open to suspicion, and as calling for the severest scrutiny.¹ Indeed, the cases are rare in which standing alone the opinions of experts (and their testimony seldom amounts to more), would be regarded as a sufficient basis for judicial action. The critic is, then, a witness; or, if you would stretch his functions to the utmost limit of legitimacy, he is also an advocate to press by argument his theory as to the facts upon the court. But he is not satisfied even with this double rôle. He must ascend the bench, and by his charge as judge throw the weight of the court's

¹ Fitzjames Stephen, "Hist. of the Criminal Law," Vol. I., p. 575 f.

authority into the scale in his own favor ; then as jury render a verdict in accordance with his original testimony ; and finally, as sheriff, execute the sentence of dismemberment imposed by the court.¹ A most convenient, short-cut method this, and one calculated to discourage overmuch controversy. In the ordinary walks of life such all-embracing pretensions are rarely encountered, and when they are the pretender is naturally overwhelmed with deserved ridicule. To find an exact parallel one would have to resort to the pages of comic opera, where Pooh Bah was not only the Mikado's prime minister, but also held every other office in sight that was worth having.

3. Many Christians object, and strongly object, to both the phrase and the practice of the "study of the Bible as literature." Of course, from the necessities of the case it is couched in terms of human speech, and uses alphabetical symbols and grammatical forms as the servants of its purpose, and therefore in a restricted sense it may be called letters. But that for them exhausts its relation to the literature of men simply as such. In the highly improbable case of a modern critic admitting that certain ancient worthies wrote the books attached to their names, that would still be an incomplete and misleading statement unless he went further and said that these holy men of old spake

¹ G. A. Smith, "Modern Criticism," pp. 72, 73.

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. If these books are to mean anything worth while to the Christian it must be because they are human utterances *plus* direct and explicit divine inspiration ; and the one constituent is as controlling of the category to which they belong as the other. When the critic assumes to ignore the latter element, and on that assumption to proceed with his dissections as though the whole fact were before him, and announces his final estimate as covering and accounting for all the phenomena of the case, and as constituting a complete determination of all the issues involved, then the *plus* becomes an excrescence and an impertinence. If, however, the divine agency is admitted, not as a mere empty phrase, but in any real and substantial sense, his examination becomes a futile attempt to solve a problem with an important factor absent, and the result reached is as valuable and as edifying as though one should undertake an exhaustive analysis of a complex chemical process or compound without regard to its base or its principal reaction ; or as though another should essay to give a complete account of the revolutionary conflict with the Declaration of Independence and the conditions which led to its proclamation left out of the reckoning ; or a third should write a life of George Washington dealing solely with his career as a land surveyor, and yet purporting to explain why he stood first in

war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.

The study of the Bible as literature is a well-sounding phrase. It seems at first blush to be eminently fair and reasonable. But when its implications are taken into account, then its true character becomes at once apparent as an attempt to prejudge the whole case in a manner unfavorable to the unique authority of the Scriptures. Among the criteria to be applied in the study of human history would be surely these: (1) Miracles do not happen; and (2) Prophecy does not predict. Now, when the literary critic finds in the Bible instances of both kinds, *i. e.*, miracles and predictive prophecy, what does he do? Accept them as natural concomitants of a divinely ordered history and divinely revealed truth? Not at all. He strikes the first out of the record as incredible, and condemns the second as made after the event.

It is true one critic says that "criticism in the hands of Christian scholars does not banish or destroy the inspiration of the Old Testament; it presupposes it."¹ But this is an affront upon common intelligence. It means nothing and com-

¹ Driver, "Introd. to the Literature of the O. T.," 10th ed., p. xiii. Some trenchant and well-merited comments on the uncritical character of this dexterous evasion are made, and the fallacies of the plea exposed by Rev. John Thomas, M. A., of Liverpool, in his recent work, "The Organic Unity of the Pentateuch"; a book well worth the careful consideration of those who think the last word has been said upon Pentateuchal criticism.

mits to nothing. For the writer evidently finds this presupposed divine inspiration to be no bar in the way of reaching conclusions which can have no other meaning than, as justly stated by Chancellor Lias, that "the Scriptures in their present form are not merely tinged with inaccuracy, but are plainly and distinctly false, and to a considerable degree intentionally false from one end to the other."¹

In what condition this leaves the inspiration "presupposed" by the critics it is needless to state.

¹ Lias, "Principles of Biblical Criticism," p. 91.

III

THE OLD BELIEF

In the severe discipline that followed the Fall; in the choice of a single family to be the depositary of the belief in the One True God; in the establishment of the laws which were necessary for a community organized on that belief; in the moral education of the people of Israel by blessings and by chastisements; in the development of the inward spirit of the law by means of the prophetic writings until the purpose of God stood revealed in all its clearness in the person and life of Jesus Christ—we see One Mind manifest throughout, using means natural and supernatural as it seemed best, but in all working to one end—the manifestation of God as infinite Power, infinite Wisdom, and infinite Love.

—*J. J. Lias.*

None is like Jeshurun's God,
So great, so strong, so high,
Lo, he spreads his wings abroad,
He rides upon the sky.
Israel is his first-born son,
God, the almighty God is thine,
See him to thy help come down,
The excellence divine.

Thee the great Jehovah deigns
To succor and defend;
Thee the eternal God sustains,
Thy Maker and thy Friend.
He is Israel's sure defense,
Israel all his care shall prove,
Kept by watchful providence
And ever-waking love.

—*C. Wesley.*

III

THE OLD BELIEF

The faith which was once delivered to the saints.

—*Jude. 3,*

THE declaration of those things which were once most surely believed by Christians of a generation not yet wholly departed, would seem to-day like echoes of a far-off and half-forgotten time. An attempt at their restatement, not with the systematic precision or in the technical terms of the professional theologian, but after the simple and inartificial fashion in which they presented themselves to the devout and uncritical believer in those earlier and happier days, will show to what lengths the church has traveled during the past thirty years. Advocates of progress at any cost will say, in the direction of elevation and breadth of view; others, that those phrases merely stand for vagueness and indifference, stages on the road to the desired goal of quasi-religious rationalism, a church without dogma, which to them is the same thing as a body without a soul.

These older Christians believed that the human race sprang from the loins of Adam, who came

complete and perfect from the hands of God, in some way they knew not how, fashioned after the image and likeness of his Creator. From this first estate Adam, by transgression, fell, losing the image, as he had forfeited the favor of his Maker and bringing upon himself and upon his race the condemnation of death. But even while sentence was being passed the infinite mercy of God coupled with the doom the hope of a Deliverer. This hope, gathering clearness with each succeeding age, renewed in the prophecy of Noah that God should dwell in the tents of Shem, was solemnly confirmed in the covenant with Abraham, the historic starting-point of definite revelation, and further limited in the line of Isaac and of Israel, his son and his son's son, in whose seed all nations of the earth were to be blessed.

From that time forward, to quote the succinct and yet comprehensive summary of Professor Robertson :

The people of Israel stood in a peculiar relation to God, and received from him special intimations of his will and character, and were by him peculiarly guided and directed in their growth into a nation, and in their existence as a State. By a signal display of divine power they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt and led into the desert of Sinai, where the covenant made with Abraham was renewed with awful sanctions. Upon the covenant was reared the law, ordaining holiness on God's people, fencing round their daily life with ceremonial prescriptions, and educating

their spiritual life so that they might be in deed as in ideal a kingdom of priests, an holy nation. Up to this ideal, however, they never came. On the contrary, they sinned under the very shadow of Sinai; and throughout the course of their journey in the wilderness, marked as it was by constant tokens of divine guidance, they exhibited continual backsliding and fell into one corruption after another. Even when, by signal displays of divine favor, they were brought into the promised land and made victorious over its inhabitants, they sinned against the God who had favored them, and conformed to the practices of their neighbors. Nevertheless they were not rejected, nor was their education interrupted. A series of prophets, from Samuel's time onwards, arose to testify against them and to plead for a higher life. These men, with one voice, whether in the northern or the southern kingdom, tell the same tale of God's great doings for his people in the past; they reprove, rebuke, exhort; they confront kings and people, and denounce priests and false prophets alike—the burden of their message being the same from age to age. Nor do they lose faith in God's promise. As troubles gather about the nation, their reproof of sin becomes more stern, their enforcement of God's righteousness more emphatic, but their trust in his faithfulness remains unshaken. As the fabric of the nation falls to pieces, their views become only the more spiritual, and hope lives on even in captivity. It was indeed the voice of prophecy and the belief in its fulfillment that sustained the captives in Babylon and stimulated the pious under Ezra and Nehemiah to return to their native land, and there, cured finally of idolatry, to set up the worship of God with punctilious regard to the precepts of the old law, which, during their prosperity, had been slighted.¹

¹ "Early Religion of Israel," Vol. I., p. 31 f.

To Christians of the time mentioned this law was not only precept but prophecy, and while it had primary relation to the life and conduct of Israel under the old covenant, it had also a forward look, and was big with the promise of a new and better covenant and the unfolding of a larger and fuller revelation of God, not only to Israel, but to the whole world. It was to them the shadow of things to come, of which the substance was Christ.

They saw, moreover, in certain characters of the Bible—Joseph, Moses, Aaron, and others—partial and incomplete, but none the less divinely ordained types of Him who was to come. More particularly the Mosaic history and institutions, law, ritual, observances, tabernacle, and priesthood, indeed everything that was basal in the life and history of the chosen race, pointed with unerring precision to the same event, and were prophecies in act and fact of some aspect in the life and mission of our divine Lord, or were illustrative of cardinal elements of gospel truth. The paschal lamb with its sheltering blood sprinkled on lintel and doorpost spoke to them of “Christ our pass-over who was sacrificed for us.”¹ The great day of atonement with its interceding priest, bringing within the veil the blood of the sin offering, became transparent, and they saw through it the form of One greater than Aaron, who, being both

¹ 1 Cor. 5 : 7.

sacrifice and priest, by his own blood entered in once into the holy place not made with hands, even into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for them, having obtained eternal redemption for all who should believe.¹

And so on through all the details of the sacrificial system of the Levitical law, and all the salient features of the history of Israel—the deliverance from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the manna in the wilderness, the water from the smitten rock, the guiding pillar of cloud, the brazen serpent, the entrance into the promised land—all headed up in Christ and found in him their final and complete fulfillment.

In like manner to him gave all the prophets witness. He was the burden of their message, and his Spirit being with them, they testified beforehand of the manner and place of his birth, of the time of his appearing, of his lineage according to the flesh, of his relation to the Father, of his absolute submission to the divine will, of his anointing by the Spirit, of the nature of his redeeming work, of his vicarious sufferings and death, and of the glory that should follow. They saw too that these minute and intimate correspondences were not confined to any one period, nor exhibited solely in any one class of Old Testament writings, but ran through the whole course of

¹ Heb. 9 : 10. Moorehead : "Studies in Mosaic Inst."

sacred history, and were manifested alike in law, annal, psalmody, prophecy, and apocalypse. This, in their view, negated any assumption that they were vague, chance coincidences, or such undesignated sequences as might be traced through any given series of events, and evinced a unity of plan and a continuity of purpose which stamped upon them the sign-manual of Deity, and referred them unmistakably to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

And when in the fullness of time the Only Begotten of the Father came on his saving mission to this world, their faith was that he lived, suffered, died, and rose again "according to the Scriptures." To them the Christian revelation was no isolated and unrelated phenomenon, new-sprung out of nothing, but was rooted and grounded in an older covenant, which in turn was confirmed by two immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie, that they might have strong consolation who had fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.

This gospel of the Son of God they regarded as the perfect and final revelation of the love of God to man. It was the faith once for all delivered to the saints, full-orbed and complete, as to which naught could be added nor aught taken away; admitting of no change and susceptible of no improvement. It was no mere intermediate

link in a chain of natural evolutionary processes, no germ containing simply the potentiality of development to larger and finer issues. It was the topmost apex of revealed truth, beyond which there could be no ascent. As such it was theirs to reject or to accept, and their conviction was that upon an unfeigned and hearty reception of this truth, applied and vitalized by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, there was wrought in them that change which was to make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, to deliver them from the power of darkness and translate them into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

They believed further that he would come again, even as he had said, and that this coming was the hope of the church, for which all true Christians should watch, and upon which hinged the restoration of Israel, the blessedness of the world, and the final triumph of good over evil. And strange to say, there are still those who are looking for the Master's appearing, and who daily include in their prayers the petition, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

It is entirely plain that a theology based on such assumptions and proceeding along such lines, is hopelessly out of touch with Christianity according to the prevailing mode. The high, dry air of modern Christian culture is altogether too

rarefied for crude conceptions of the kind mentioned to thrive in. We are nothing nowadays if not philosophical, and the gospel, to have any standing at all in scholastic circles, must be restated in terms of the latest philosophy of origin or history—in other words, of the newest popular adaptation of the evolutionary hypothesis. And our men of light and leading are to-day engaged in the congenial task of rescuing the “sweet secret of authentic Christianity” from the mass of myth and dogma under which it has lain buried during the dark ages of the past nineteen centuries. The old beliefs, however, we are consolingly told, “do not die; the *Zeitgeist* breathes on them, and they are changed.” They are indeed, “into something new and strange.” Although perhaps the word “change” is hardly descriptive of the fate which the old faith has met at the hands of the new philosophy.

IV

THE OLD BOOK

When quiet in my house I sit,
Thy book be my companion still,
My joy thy sayings to repeat,
Talk o'er the records of thy will,
And search the oracles divine
Till every heartfelt word be mine.

Oh, may thy gracious words divine
Subject of all my converse be,
So shall the Lord his follower join,
And walk and talk himself with me ;
So shall I all his presence prove
And know his everlasting love.

—C. Wesley.

IV

THE OLD BOOK

God . . . at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.

—*Hebrews. 1:1.*

THE attitude of the representative Christian of the old-fashioned type toward the Book was no uncertain one. He simply received it fully and unreservedly as the written word of God, a complete revelation of the mind and will of God to men, an infallible rule of life, an authoritative standard of faith, and a sole and ultimate appeal in all matters of duty and doctrine.

Even though in his days the rage for theorizing and systematizing had not attained to anything like its present proportions, many theories of inspiration were from time to time formulated; but he did not greatly concern himself about them. The fact of inspiration sufficed for him. Any attempt to rule upon the question of degrees of inspiration within the book he would have at once condemned as unprofitable and presumptuous. That question, if such an one had been mooted, he would have pronounced to belong to the secret

counsels of Deity, on which it did not become him to dogmatize. Whatever inspiration might mean, to him it was in all places and for all purposes plenary, and a sufficient guaranty that what he read was a divinely given word written for his learning and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that he might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. But this does not mean that he used it with an entire lack of discrimination, recognizing no relative importance or applicability of one part over another, but consulting it as one would a dream book or a magic oracle, as he is slanderously reported to have done. Strange as it may seem to an arrogant modern pundit, he did not altogether take leave of common sense when he approached the study of Holy Writ. On the contrary, the fear was ever before his eyes that he might through human ignorance or presumption handle it deceitfully, and his unceasing prayer was that he might be a workman needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. Of course, there ever existed for him the danger of too rigid an adherence to its strict letter in violation of its inner intent. But of this danger he was not ignorant, and as he read he prayed that the Lord by his Spirit would shine upon the truths of his word, and his faith was that this petition was heard and answered.

He realized too, that understanding was conditioned upon obedience. He was not unmindful of his Lord's words, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." And he knew full well that every duty left undone would obscure for him some truth he would otherwise have known. Commentaries he valued according to the measure of the evangelical spirit evinced and the experimental knowledge of the spiritual content of biblical truth manifested. On the scholastic side they did not strongly appeal to him; but on the whole his estimate of the value of the word was so high that he was infinitely more interested in the study of the Bible itself than in the reading of books about the Bible. And he did read his Bible, and knew it from beginning to end. This knowledge colored his conceptions of life and duty, molded his habits of thought and action, and impressed itself upon his forms of speech, seasoning his conversation with godly salt. His delight was in the law of the Lord, and in that law did he meditate day and night. He was emphatically a man of the book.

The charge of bibliolatry, if the word or the taunt had been in vogue in his day, he would have indignantly denied, knowing that his reverent love for the Author of the word would effectually prevent him from belittling the light itself, because of his regard for the medium through which it was

refracted, or from yielding to either, the devotion due to its Source, the supreme object of his adoration and service. As a choice of evils, however, he would much rather have had the reputation of a bibliolater than that of a biblioclast.

The fact that its contents were in matter and in form as varied as the manifold activities and circumstances of human life presented no difficulties to his mind. For whether he read history, law, ritual, biography, allegory, homily, apothegm, hymnody, prophecy, or apocalypse in its pages, he clearly perceived under all diversity of mode the unity of one informing Spirit, and through all the intricacies of the pattern he reverently traced the master-hand of the great designer, knowing that it was God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. Though many pens transcribed the message as the word of the Lord came to seer and singer and historian from age to age, he saw the sign manual of its author and finisher on every line, convinced as he was that the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. He was verily assured that through all its varieties of form, of subject, of treatment, the same unalterable and eternal purpose ran—to declare the mind of God and to set forth to men the way of life—so that whatsoever things were

written aforetime were written for his learning, that he, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. In the history and utterances of patriarch and lawgiver and priest and prophet he beheld the initial and preparatory stages of the revelation of the living God; he heard the one voice speaking the living word through many messengers until it reached its consummation in the incarnate Word, the word made flesh and dwelling among men, whose glory they beheld—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth. To him all Hebrew scripture was eloquent of Christ, leading to Christ, resting in Christ, and paling before Christ, as the lesser before the greater glory.¹ And this was true not only of the Messianic prophecies, commonly so called, but of all Scripture, so that he could say with Dean Alford: “The whole Scriptures are a testimony to Him; the whole history of the chosen people, with its types, its law, and its prophecies is a showing forth of Him.” With a habit akin to that of the ancient seers he inquired and searched diligently what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

He would be, indeed, surprised to learn, as we are now told by a distinguished modern exegete,

¹ Pierson, “Many Infallible Proofs,” p. 263.

that in so doing he became a mere flatterer of his Lord, overdoing typology by spinning plausible allegories and assiduously polishing each rite and institution of the Jewish law in the attempt to make it a mirror of him and his sacrifice, and without moral insight or real devotion heaping upon him indiscriminately all the titles of Old Testament history, and symbolizing every detail of Jewish worship so as to find in them a proof of his divinity.¹ But the unchristian imputation of unworthy motives he would have passed over in silence as beneath his notice. Nor would the jaunty condemnation of his methods have deterred him from prosecuting his labor of love in following out his Lord's injunction: "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." And as between Henry Alford and George Adam Smith, he would not for one moment have hesitated to decide which one most truly breathed his Master's spirit, or against whom the lack of "moral insight or real devotion" could properly be charged. And this, notwithstanding the fact that the latter felicitates himself upon his superior perspicacity in discovering types of Christ where he says no one ever thought of looking for them before—namely, in the "Song of Deborah" and "David's Dirge upon Saul and Jonathan."²

¹ G. A. Smith, "Modern Criticism," etc., p. 146.

² Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 147.

Critical methods, as the term is understood to-day, he would surely have considered incompatible with his reverence for the word of God, and he most certainly would not have traveled to Germany to borrow from avowed unbelievers and rationalists the apparatus with which to conduct his researches and the canons of interpretation by which his conclusions were to be governed. Indeed, the only critical method which he would have regarded as either fitting or wholesome was that employed by the Bereans, who received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so.

He realized, moreover, his absolute dependence upon the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit for a right understanding of its true meaning and intent. And he never approached its study without breathing the spirit of the psalmist's prayer: "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." A verse from the hymnody of that period expresses truly the general conviction of Christians in that regard :

Still we believe, almighty Lord,
Whose presence fills both earth and
heaven,
The meaning of the written word
Is by thine inspiration given.
Thou only dost thyself explain
The secret mind of God to man.

With whatever purpose he pondered its pages, whether educational, devotional, or for homiletic use, he always essayed its interpretation with the prayer that God might spare the hand put forward to touch his ark, and "with a sense of utter weakness before the power of his word, and inability to sound the depths even of its simplest sentence."¹

This reverential habit naturally determined his attitude toward the difficulties and obscurities which from time to time confronted him. He never dreamed of attributing these difficulties to a lack of harmony or of divine direction on the part of the biblical writers. They might be formidable, but he was persuaded that they were soluble; and that the defect lay in his own ignorance, and not in the fallibility of the word. He was content to let obscurities remain in darkness until in his own good time God should be pleased by his Spirit to shine upon them; and this, not for the mere satisfaction of his curiosity, but, when necessary, for his spiritual growth and sustenance, or for guidance in the path wherein he was called to tread. Resolving discords by destroying the harpstrings, he was not sufficiently "advanced" in those uncritical days to appreciate.

He was an eager student of the prophetic word; and while he fully recognized in it the presence of

¹ Dean Alford, quoted by Sir Robert Anderson, in "The Bible and Modern Criticism," p. 13.

an element of even greater importance than that of prediction, he still cherished the testimony of fulfilled prophecy as a valuable item of evidence of the divine origin of revealed religion, if such external support were needed. It was a matter of faith with him that the secrets of the Lord had been revealed to the prophets who, whether witting or unwitting, lifted the veil of the future with an unerring precision altogether beyond the utmost reach of human prescience; that

Thoughts beyond their thought
To those high bards were given ;

that, in short, the voice of Him who sees the end from the beginning spoke in and through them of the things which should be thereafter. And as he read in the pages of history what was to him abundant confirmation of the express fulfillment of many of these predictions,¹ an element of stability was imparted to his comfortable assurance that not one jot or tittle should pass from the word until all should be fulfilled.

Of course, he would be chided by the "Christian critic" of to-day for his mistaken view of the function and scope of prophecy as one worthy only of an age of superstition and credulity. He would be informed that the predictive is an altogether negligible quality in prophecy, if indeed it ever

¹ See Pierson : *Op. cit.*, pp. 37-78, 185-214.

connoted such a quality at all ; that it was a vulgar use of the name "prophet" to employ it as descriptive of "one who foretells the future" ; and that "of this meaning it is, perhaps, the first duty of every student of prophecy earnestly and stubbornly to rid himself."¹ For, to the scientific exegetes of the hour, everything which savors of the supernatural is a feature to be "earnestly and stubbornly" combated. Judged by their rule, the prophets were not foretellers but forthtellers—simply righteous men who had higher "conceptions" of God than their neighbors, a wide and clear outlook upon their times, a keen eye for the implications of facts, and sound judgment as to the inexorable logic of events, whose utterances were directed, and substantially limited, to their immediate audience and to the evils and needs of the then present occasion ; faithful preachers, in a word, popular or unpopular according to the tenor of their message.

Now, if this be *all* that prophecy means, there does not seem to be any good reason why the prophetic canon should ever have closed ; or why its bulk might not be from time to time augmented by such utterances as Doctor Parkhurst's sermons on municipal corruption, and the ecclesiastico-legal portions of the book enriched, even at this late date, by the inclusion of, say, Doctor Briggs' discourse

¹ Smith : "Book of the Twelve Prophets," Vol. I., p. 11.

on "Episcopal Orders and the Apostolical Succession." This would only be following the recent suggestion of a canon of the Church of England that parts of the Old Testament should be removed from its lectionary, and selections from religious literature substituted in their place.

Of course, the Christian of the time and type mentioned would have been the first to admit that prophetic gifts of a sort survived through all the ages of the church. Indeed, he would have insisted that all true preaching partook of the nature of prophecy. Only, he would have been careful, in defining the term, to limit it to that spiritual insight which is at once the call and the qualification of the preacher to expound and enforce the written word. And he would in no wise have thought of elevating him to a parity with those Hebrew prophets, whose divinely dictated oracles formed an integral part of that indivisible, organic whole which we name "the revelation of God in Christ Jesus," of which revelation the Bible is the inspired and infallible record. On the other hand, he would have resisted just as strongly any attempt to lower scriptural prophecy to the level of, or place it in the same category with, any extra-canonical utterance, however exalted or edifying it might be. He was no eulogist of ignorance, nor ever looked upon it as the "mother of devotion." On the contrary, he welcomed all the

light which consecrated learning and expository genius could throw upon the meaning of the word ; and he thankfully counted, in the fellowship of those like-minded with him, a goodly company of scholars with names as eminent as any that were ever inscribed on the beadroll of fame.

But learning and scholarship were of use to him only when they were the handmaids of piety. To godless erudition, he would have said, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." And he would have questioned its ability to apprehend even the alphabet of revelation. On the other hand, he was quick to recognize the presence of profound spiritual insight and sound-biblical knowledge in those whom the world classed as unlettered. For he remembered that in Pentecostal days the boldness of "ignorant and unlearned men" confounded the wisdom of the Sanhedrin ; and he believed that the same Spirit that moved them was still present, and potent, and operative upon the hearts of God's children, irrespective either of the presence or the lack of what men call education.

He would have held in light esteem the assiduous labors of the modern critics in their attempts to account on natural grounds for the way in which this or that portion of the Bible came to be written ; while their efforts to "fit the text to the occasion" by the projection of hypothetical "historical settings," he would have characterized as

wild surmise and riotous imagination, unchastened by reverence and without foundation in fact. He was vastly more concerned to be familiar with the word as it stood, so that by God's help he might translate its teachings into character and conduct, and be fittingly equipped to be a cup-bearer of the water of life to a dying world.

This was his regimen, and it bred giants; men of whom the world was not worthy, who loved not their lives unto the death, who resisted unto blood, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints, and who could say at the close of their warfare, "I have fought a good fight." The sole weapon with which they went forth conquering and to conquer, was the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

V

THE NEW HISTORY

The origination of the monotheistic conception in the prophets of the eighth century would be as great a puzzle as its origination in the days of Abraham. By no process of development can we evolve any of the Belim into Jehovah, the lofty and holy One inhabiting eternity, ruling wisely in heaven and justly upon earth. The prophetic writings of the eighth century are unaccountable unless as the outgrowth of a long previous course of reflections upon higher than heathen beliefs. If Hebrew religion started from the idea, however crudely apprehended, of the unity of God, the creator and ruler of the world, then the truths proclaimed by Amos and Isaiah, and the clearer perception of these truths expressed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, are natural developments of the original faith. If otherwise, the prophets are personalities as inexplicable as Abraham himself, and their teaching is indeed "as great a psychological and moral mystery as any of the miracles recorded in Scripture."

—*Archibald Scott.*

V

THE NEW HISTORY

As for this Moses, . . . we wot not what is become of him.

—*Exodus. 32:1.*

WE have changed all that. In educated circles to-day neither the old belief nor the old book has any standing in court, even with those who give a qualified and provisional assent to a catena of nebulous, subjective speculations which they dignify by the name of the philosophy of the Christian religion. Culture, faith, and philosophy must at all hazards coincide; and if there must needs be a clash it will be neither culture nor philosophy which will go by the board. The fad of the hour is a brand new history of the human race and of the origin and growth of religion, warranted to harmonize with the most extravagant of all the protean forms which the evolutionary theory can by any possibility assume.

Once it was said of man, "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him," and it was accepted as an accurate, if summary, account of his origin. But we know better now.

The plain truth—and we have no reason to hide it—is that we do not know the beginnings of man's life, of his history, of his sin ; we do not know them historically on historical evidence ; and we should be content to let them remain in the dark until science throws what light it can upon them.¹

That is to say, we must turn our backs upon Genesis, and in the pages of Darwin and Haeckel find as the progenitor of the race, not Adam, created in the image of his Maker, but a hairy biped, probably arboreal in his habits, with pointed ears and prehensile toes, and, perhaps, a tail ; which appendage, if he lived in trees, was certainly a convenience. The fall of man never happened ; or, if there was a fall, it was, as a celebrated preacher once said, a fall upwards. Sin, instead of being a willful transgression of express divine command, becomes a mere defect in the adjustment of the organism to its environment, an inevitable and indispensable, if not indeed beneficent constituent of human nature in its upward struggle ; an illustrative instance of the "soul of good in things evil," and in the final event to be educated and bred out of the race much as one would by careful selection and tendance breed defects out of and desirable qualities into a flock of merinos or a herd of Jersey cattle.

In like manner, leaving our Saviour's life and mission out of the question for the moment, there

¹ Professor Denny, "Studies in Theology," p. 79.

has never been any revelation of God to men definitely and distinctly recognizable as such. In place of this we have from the beginnings of history and far beyond, human conceptions of God innumerable, ranging from the most degraded forms of fetichism to the "ethic monotheism" of the later Hebrew prophets; no one, so far as external authority goes, being entitled to claim preference over any other, inasmuch as all are alike destitute of objective reality. Each man thus, or group of men, is the creator of his or its own deity; and the parody: "So man created God in his own image, in the image of man created he him," flippant and profane though it be, is nevertheless absolutely true to the facts of the case according to the requirements of the theory under consideration.

And since there is no room for a direct and authentic communication from God to men in this scheme there was of course no divine call of Abraham; if, indeed, such a personage ever existed. On this latter point there is some divergence between the critics, the difference, however, being without real significance. The German critic, who holds the center of the field to-day, regards him as a late invention, a fictitious person who, even in the days of Amos, had not reached the same stage as Isaac and Jacob.¹ One Scotch

¹ Wellhausen, "*Prolegomena*," etc., p. 320.

follower, less logical and not so thorough in his zeal for destruction, admits a critical reaction in favor of recognizing the personality of Abraham.¹ On what evidence this reaction rests it is impossible to conjecture. He adduces none; so it is probably due to sheer kindness on his part and a dislike for literary homicide unless it is absolutely necessary. Even so Abraham is a name and nothing else; for the writer, with the air of one who has reached the end of his tether in the way of compromising admissions, goes on to caution us against harboring the delusion that the patriarchal narratives contain more than "a substratum of actual personal history." And then with naïve confidence he asks, "But who wants to be sure of more? Who needs to be sure of more?"² He must be a highly unreasonable person who would "ask for more" after such a magnanimous concession to "traditionalist" weaknesses.

With the history of the patriarchs fall the divine revelations and promises of which it forms the record; and whether they were mere names or actual persons matters little so far as their connection with revealed religion is concerned. If they existed at all they were rank idolaters probably of a rather low type. For many centuries later the religion of their putative descendants was still only

¹ G. A. Smith, "Modern Crit. and Preaching of O. T.," p. 107.

² *Ibid.*

"a polytheism with an opportunity for monotheism at the heart of it"¹—whatever in particular that extraordinary phrase may happen to mean; perhaps that possessing a favorite tribal deity made it easier for them by degrees to reach the point of denial of deities of other tribes. So Mormonism might be called polygamy with an opportunity for monogamy at the heart of it, the Mormon becoming gradually so enamored of his favorite wife that he is finally moved to discard the others on her account. Truly, if the critics are right,

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.

The existence of Moses seems to be pretty generally conceded. The writer just quoted says that no one has ever doubted it. But in this he is mistaken, for M. Maurice Vernes characterizes the great lawgiver as a post-exilic creation of the lawyers of the Judean restoration. His leadership of the Israelites in their escape from Egyptian bondage seems also to be accepted, although at least one critic has been found to deny that Israel ever sojourned in Egypt.² When we inquire into his connection with their religion, however, we are on more uncertain ground. For while Kuenen says that the germs of the higher consciousness of God

¹ Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 131.

² Stade, "*Geschichte der Volkes Israel*," Vol. I., p. 129.

were present in the Mosaic age,¹ it must be remembered that the Israelites at that time, and for long centuries thereafter, were polytheists, and that Jehovah was no more to them than Chemosh was to Moab or Milcom to the Ammonites.² This consciousness, then, can hardly have been of a very elevated type. Indeed, Wellhausen claims that for Moses to have given them enlightened conceptions of God would have been to offer them a stone instead of bread, and that in that particular he probably allowed them to continue in the same way of thinking with their fathers.³

There appears to be an intimation here that Moses himself occupied a more exalted plane, although the source of his own superior knowledge is not suggested. But the idea that he was the depositary of an immediate divine revelation and the medium through which a divinely enacted body of law was to be promulgated is a mistaken one, wholly unsupported by evidence; and any statement to the contrary in the record is, to put it charitably, a mere projection of very late conceptions into very early times, or, to call things by their right names, the wholesale fabrication of fictions under the guise of history.

¹ The germ theory does certainly crop out in unexpected places.

² Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 151; Kuenen, "National Religions," p. 116.

³ "*Prolegomena*," etc., p. 437.

So, then, in no real sense, certainly in no unique sense, was Israel chosen of Jehovah, the eternally existing One—chosen of him that they might be a peculiar treasure unto him above all people, a kingdom of priests and an holy nation, in whom all families of the earth were to be blessed. That is an idea which is no longer “tenable in our days.” They stood on no other footing than their neighbors. Their religion was not to be distinguished either in origin or in character from those of the surrounding nations.¹ It was “nothing less, but also nothing more.”² Nor was Jehovah the almighty maker of heaven and earth. He was simply a local god with strictly circumscribed tribal jurisdiction, whose worship was in no wise inconsistent with a belief in the reality of other deities, but rather, from its peculiar limitations, implied a multiplicity of national gods. Mount Sinai was selected as the scene of his manifestation—not because the fact was so, but because it was a sort of Oriental Olympus, the sacred mountain of the Semitic peoples.³ The religion was, in short, a thoroughly idolatrous cult, having in its primitive stages a close affinity with bull worship, indications of which are found by the critics in Jeroboam’s images at Bethel and Dan, and in the “story” of

¹ Robertson Smith, “Religion of the Semites,” p. 3 f.

² Kuenen, “Religion of Israel,” Vol. I., p. 5.

³ Wellhausen, “*Proleg.*,” pp. 343, 439.

Aaron's golden calf. Kuenen considers it probable that the golden bull had, up to the days of the divided kingdom, always remained in vogue as a symbol of Jahveh.¹ The ark was an idol at first,² as were also the golden calves above mentioned, Gideon's ephod at Ophra, and the brazen serpent which Moses set up in the desert.³

In one important particular their religion was even below the prevailing level, in that it was not indigenous. According to the critics, the Israelites were inveterate borrowers. They borrowed from the Assyrians the idea of the winged bull as a symbol of Deity ; they borrowed from Babylonia the Decalogue, the antediluvian patriarchs, and the creation and flood myths ;⁴ they borrowed from Egypt the ark, the model of the temple, the priestly vestments and the Urim and Thummim ;⁵ they borrowed from the Canaanites their sanctuaries and sacred tombs. Indeed the only things which the critics would not allow as coming under that head were the jewels of gold and silver and the raiment which they borrowed from the Egyptians

¹ Kuenen, "The Religion of Israel," Vol. I., p. 346.

² Wellhausen, "*Proleg.*," p. 189.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 283. It is strange that while the pentateuchal narrative is myth and invention when it is urged in support of the biblical theory, it suddenly acquires both historicity and evidential force when needed for critical purposes.

⁴ Delitzsch, "Babel and Bible."

⁵ Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," Vol. I., p. 275.

on their escape from bondage. That would be giving credit to the Exodus narrative, which of course would never do.

On this plane the religious history of Israel started, and on this plane for many centuries it continued. As before stated, the Israelites were polytheists, or at best monolaters; and their prophets were, with here and there an exception, troops of "drunken dervishes," and in later times, "miserable fellows who ate out of the king's hand and were treated with disdain by members of the leading classes."¹ When during the course of their history in Canaan they followed after strange gods—Moloch, the Baalim, and other Canaanitish deities—it was not a lapse from a purer faith supernaturally revealed at their very birth as a people, but a mere excursion into outside cults occupying the same level as their own—natural tributes of homage to the gods of the land in recognition of their territorial rights, distinct from but not necessarily antagonistic to the rights of their own tribal deity.

This condition of things obtained, without change or substantial improvement, until the days of the divided monarchy when, in the eighth century before Christ, the earliest of the writing prophets, Amos and Hosea, in some way developed higher "conceptions" of God—the antecedent stages of

¹ Wellhausen, p. 293.

which "development," however, are nowhere stated or so much as hinted at. But even this did not then carry with it the conviction of the utter nullity of idols or idol worship; that point was not reached until the later times of Jeremiah and the Deutero-Isaiah. These higher conceptions of God—which seem to the common mind to have been in no sense such a development as the critics claim, but rather, from the critical standpoint, an absolute reversal of all preconceived ideas—finally culminated in the "ethic monotheism" of later Judaic history, which became thereafter the central article of their creed.

During the exile the Levitical scribes, out of the remnants of old traditions and the memories of ancient rites and pre-exilic temple usages, compiled and elaborated a system of laws to meet the exigencies of the new situation. Into this code they incorporated the book of Deuteronomy, dating from the reign of Josiah, and on the return from exile in the days of Ezra this compilation, at once a theology and a ceremonial, was set up as the original charter of Israel, in the minute and punctilious observance of which their religion was thenceforward to consist. Thus the codifiers, seeking to frame a norm through which this newly evolved idea of the divine unity might be expressed, achieved an unlooked-for and disastrous result. They killed the prophetic impulse, and for the

living voice of God speaking through the prophets, substituted the iron trammels of a dead law.¹ So, as the event proved, the prophets, without meaning it, "were the spiritual destroyers of the old Israel."² The ultimate outcome was rabbinism and the endless puerilities of the Talmudists.

Yet in this preposterous muddle of human purblindness and cross-purposes and topsyturvydom—as complete an instance of hysteron-proteron as could well be imagined—we are invited to see the working of a divine plan and the preparation for a fuller revelation of God in the incarnation of our divine Lord. It is not development; it is catastrophism in its most violent form.

In this scheme, if such an incoherent medley can be called a scheme, we have progress and retrogression, elevation and degradation, elaboration and degeneration alternating with bewildering inconsequence—anything and everything rather than the measured and orderly march of an evolutionary process by the operation of self-contained forces from a lower to a higher level. Doubtless it requires great skill and dexterity to stand an inverted pyramid upon its apex and hold it there even for a brief space. The permanent stability of such a structure is quite another question.

¹ Robertson, "Early Religion of Israel," Vol. I., p. 37.

² Wellhausen, "*Prolegomena*," p. 491.

VI

THE MUTILATED BOOK

It is difficult, in reviewing the charges made against the sacred record and its authors, to avoid the impression that the critics, instead of analyzing the facts with which they profess to deal, and deducing from the analysis their theories, enter upon the task under the bias of foregone conclusions, to which the facts must be made to conform. Hence, the critical exigency and necessity of a reconstructed, or rather an expurgated Bible, if their theories are to have even the semblance of justification. If men of science were to frame their theories after this fashion, they would become a laughing-stock to the scientific world. And the writer is persuaded that when the glamour of literary renown, with which these theories have been emblazoned before a too credulous public, shall have been dispelled, as is being done by a riper scholarship, their authors, if heard of at all, will occupy a very humble position in the domain of biblical literature, whether of the Old Testament or the New.

—*Robert Watts.*

VI

THE MUTILATED BOOK

And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with a penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed.

—*Jeremiah. 36:23.*

It is evident that a scheme of history such as that outlined in the foregoing chapter calls for a vigorous handling of the documents upon which it is supposed to be based. It is certain that, taken at their face value, they will yield no such result. Much will have to be read into them, more stricken out. While the critics are equal to either demand, the work of obliteration seems to be the more congenial task. In fact, their achievements are reckoned brilliant or commonplace, in exact proportion to their destructive ability. With such a standard of success, it is no wonder that, like some modern surgeons, they are vastly more concerned about the brilliancy of the operation than the welfare of the patient. In criticism, if not in forestry, a man is famous according as he has lifted up axes against the thick trees.

A glance at the results will show that no complaint can be made as to the thoroughness of their

appetite and capacity for biblicide. The book of Genesis, to accept their estimate, is destroyed utterly. After they have done with it, it has no more historical value than "Jack and the Beanstalk." It may be an object of interest to the antiquarian, or a cadaver for the student in comparative mythology to dissect; but when common veracity goes, surely all claims to divine origin go also, and therewith its worth to the ordinary Christian as an authoritative utterance of the revealed truth. One critic, it is true, expatiates with great unction upon the priceless value of these fictitious patriarchal tales as themes for preaching, and their undying power on the heart, imagination, and faith of men.¹ Much useful truth is inculcated, and many sound morals are pointed by "Æsop's Fables"; but that fact would hardly justify their inclusion among the bases of a rational faith; nor would they thereby commend themselves as invaluable, or even justifiable, subjects for homiletic treatment. If these records of God's dealings with the patriarchs—dealings in which we, according to the Apostle Paul, have a direct and vital interest—are without substantial verity, then his co-apostle Peter is wrong; we have *not* the more sure word of prophecy, and we *have* followed cunningly devised fables. It is consoling to know, according to this critic, that we can without loss dispense with

¹ G. A. Smith, "Modern Criticism," etc., pp. 108, 109.

history at the *terminus a quo* of definite revelation—*i. e.*, the covenant with Abraham. But other critics of the same school make a like showing with regard to its *terminus ad quem*, claiming that we are as little assured of the facts in the life of the historic Jesus, as we are of the existence of the legendary Abraham.¹ The historicity of the intervening stages would seem, from these stand-points, to be of little moment.

And it is manifestly so accounted by them; for Exodus fares little better at their hands than did Genesis. The man Moses existed, and probably lived about the time of the exodus, if there was an exodus; and led the Israelites out of Egypt, if they were ever there. But the lawgiver Moses and the laws he was supposed to give, are myths. They saw the light centuries later, under other skies and entirely different conditions. The legend attributing the Torah to Moses arose from the fact that he was the great kadi of the wilderness—the natural leader and magistrate of the scanty and unorganized horde of Goshen shepherds whom he had led out of Egypt, and of the Kenites, Amalekites, and other Sinaitic nomads who joined them at the oasis of Kadesh-barnea. Here Moses sat and dispensed justice substantially after the fashion recommended by his father-in-law Jethro,

¹ Julicher, "Introd. to N. T." Gardner, "Historic View of N. T." "Encycl. Biblica," art. "Gospels."

and narrated in Exod. 18. And it was these oral decisions, and his instructions to the priesthood, given from time to time as occasion required, which constituted the only laws possessed by the Israelites during their desert sojourn. To this extent only can Moses be regarded as the author of the Torah.¹ And so, while such portions of the narrative as square with the critical reconstruction may be accepted as fairly trustworthy historic tradition, the legislative portions of the book must be wholly rejected as a source from which our knowledge of Mosaism can be derived.² Not even the Decalogue escapes ;³ it being assigned to the reign of Manasseh.⁴ The "fragments that remain" have little value except, as occasion serves, to enforce some derogatory point made by the critics.

Deuteronomy is fashioned out of whole cloth seven hundred years after its purported date, and hidden by its author in the temple, to be discovered and sprung upon the young and impressionable king Josiah, at an opportune time in the interests of religion and reform. This was done, we are informed, by "adherents of the Mosaic tendency."⁵

¹ Wellhausen, "Hist. of Israel and Judah" 3d ed., pp. 10 f.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21.

⁴ "*Proleg.*," p. 486. Pfeiderer, "Development of Theology," p. 271.

⁵ Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," Vol. II., p. 19.

But what the Mosaic tendency was, on the critical hypothesis, passes the wit of man to conjecture. The Israelite of the time of Moses was a polytheist, as he himself must have been, unless sadly derelict in duty toward his followers. As to whether the "opportunity for monotheism" had arisen at that early date, or was the product of later circumstances, we are left in doubt. Being ignorant of what Mosaism really was, it is, of course, impossible to know whether it was helped or hindered by the book that Hilkiyah found; which, by the way, was only the kernel of Deuteronomy as we have it. It needed two centuries more of tinkering to bring it to its completed form.

Leviticus, with such of the narrative portions of the other books as are needed to bolster it up, is a fraud pure and simple; deliberately fabricated, as to important elements of it without shadow of evidential or even legendary warrant, more than a thousand years after Moses by the priestly caste in the interests of their own order, to give the color of Mosaic origin and the weight of divine authority to a newly concocted code, designed to secure their own supremacy, and to enforce by its sanctions the burdens and exactions which they purposed to impose upon the returned exiles.

The so-called historical books are not histories at all, but books of devotion,¹ whether liturgical,

¹ Cornill, "History of the People of Israel," Eng. tr., p. 9.

or merely didactic or meditative we are not informed. Strangely enough, Wellhausen admits that they contain "really valuable historical notes." But lest we should be exalted above measure by this unprecedented critical tribute to the verity of the Scriptures, we are gravely cautioned that they are "largely mixed with anecdotic chaff"; needing, of course, the sure instinct of the critic to tell us which is which. And we may be certain that every word which points to divine inspiration or intervention will be unhesitatingly referred to the latter class.

The book of Psalms is the hymnal of the second temple;¹ no psalm, our Saviour's ascription to the contrary notwithstanding, being of undoubted Davidic authorship, or belonging to the Davidic age; but most of them having a post-exilic, or even Maccabean origin. And yet, modern as the Psalter is, the critics, on convenient occasion, can discern in it elements of the most ancient and primitive conceptions of Semitic heathenism. As, *e. g.*, when in the passage, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season" (Ps. 1:3) Robertson Smith finds a "touch of primitive naturalism," having its origin in the superstitions of the early Semites which located the sanctuaries of the Baalim in fertile valleys and by deep watercourses; or, again,

¹ G. A. Smith, "Modern Criticism," etc., p. 87.

when he connects the verse, "The sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts" (Ps. 84 : 3) with the barbaric taboo which protected birds from molestation in the sacred groves of the local gods.¹ Thus, it becomes ancient or modern according to the needs of the moment ; early when a word can be found which can be distorted into a recognition of heathenish rites or beliefs, late when exalted spiritual conceptions of God are involved.

As to the writing prophets—for we are to distinguish between them and Wellhausen's "drunken dervishes" and "miserable fellows"—their so-called works consist, to a quite considerable extent, of collections of anonymous oracles, sheltered under the ægis of well-known names to give them an authority which they would not otherwise possess. It is gratifying, however, to be certified that while modern criticism "has already removed from many of the prophets large portions of the books which bear their names" and a more thorough analysis of these books may "issue in further subtractions of the same kind," yet the constructive character of the process in question may be fearlessly asserted.² One might wonder to what practical use the prophetic books could be put were it not that the same writer enlightens us. "We now perceive

¹ Robertson Smith, "Religion of the Semites," pp. 104, 160.

² Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 217.

that their real value consisted in the indispensable preparation they provided" for eighteenth and nineteenth century criticism !¹ Which is rather a novel conception of the function of prophecy.

The book of Daniel, instead of being the inspired utterances of the great seer of the exile, is a religious novel of the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, written, "we know the very day, almost," in the month of January, 164, B. C.,² and falsely attributed to a man three hundred years dead, if he ever existed, but none the worse on that account.³ And so on through all the dreary catalogue. With few exceptions, no book in its final shape is written by the author whose name it bears ; no historical statement is contemporaneous or indeed belongs at all to the period to which it refers, but the whole is an amorphous jumble of documents, compiled and recompiled, edited and re-edited, altered and transposed, mutilated and interpolated, diminished and supplemented by one and another manipulator to meet the exigencies of the particular scheme he has in hand, or to hearten and encourage the people in some emergency which

¹ Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 251.

² Cornill, "Prophets of Israel," Eng. tr., p. 177. It is to be presumed that, the necessity existing, criticism would be equal to the further task of deciding what *kind* of a day it was and what influence the prevailing meteorological conditions had upon the psychology of the book, a result which would be just as worthy of credit as the one reached, as above indicated by Professor Cornill.

³ Dean Farrar : "The Book of Daniel."

has arisen, or some trial or peril through which they are passing. And these are the foundations on which the Christian edifice is erected.

It is probably suggested at this point that the extreme features of the above summary can only be fairly chargeable against those terrible German radicals, and that no such hostile attitude characterizes the work of the moderate and cautious critics of the English school. Even if that were so, which is by no means clear, it is well that we should remind ourselves that the higher criticism is a progressive, not to say evolutionary, science, and that its appetite for destruction grows by what it feeds on. The conservative of yesterday develops into the moderate of to-day; the moderate of to-day carries within him the "promise and potency" of the radical of to-morrow, and what the full fruitage of the process will be, time alone can disclose. One has traveled farther than the other, maybe, but they are both on the road, and *vestigia nulla retrorsum* is the badge of all their tribe. It is a far cry from Astruc in 1753, with his modest "conjectures" as to the documents used by Moses in his composition of Genesis, to Kuenen, Graf, and Wellhausen, with their dogmatic rejection of all Mosaic connection with pentateuchal legislation. And the end is not yet. Indeed one step forward has already been taken by the Frenchman, M. Vernes, who, carrying out the method to its

logical conclusion, not only discredits the author Moses, but wipes out the man Moses, as well as the prophets Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha, and places the origin of the Old Testament writings, law, prophets, and history alike, at a date subsequent to the return from captivity and the building of the second temple. At this rate of progress another half-century ought to see the whole Abrahamic race argued out of history and classed with "anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders," and such like creations of poetic fiction. True the existence of the modern Jew might seem to present obstacles in the way of such a result. But he would not. It would only be so much the worse for him. The critic would explain him away.

Even as the case stands to-day, the main difference between the German radical and the English moderate is one of manner rather than of matter. The one smashes the vessel with a jeer, the other preserves an outward show of respect and does his breakages more gently. The one brushes the fragments contemptuously aside as an encumbrance gotten rid of, the other shows great anxiety to save the pieces, and even places a higher estimate upon the shattered potsherds than upon the unbroken pitcher.

The supercilious boast is made that modern criticism has won its war against the traditional

theories of the Old Testament, and that it only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity. This, rendered into plain English, means that criticism has been successful in its assault upon the Old Testament. The phrase "traditional theories" is pure surplusage, and is a typical instance of the favorite critical device of creating a prejudice against opposing views by the dexterous use of an injurious and unwarranted phrase. With just as much propriety might one talk of the "traditional theory" of Bancroft's "History of the United States," or of Motley's "Rise of the Dutch Republic," meaning thereby that the reader, in good faith, accepted those works for what, in like good faith, they purported to be.

If, however, the boast is well founded, one consideration is urgently commended to the notice of the critics. They should by all means write, or edit, or compile a new Bible, using perhaps such portions of the old documents as are not fatally discredited, and by addition, redaction, and excision, giving us a scientifically developed account, so exact in its chronology and its statements of fact that not a loophole will be left open to the attack of the captious and the skeptical.

Assuming that the new views are to prevail; that the Christian revelation is still to be regarded as having its roots in an antecedent history; and that the facts of that history are to be accepted as

established in accordance with the critical reconstruction, the necessity of such a book is hardly open to question. It would be well also if at the same time the Old Testament could be withdrawn from circulation, or at least decanonized. Unless some such state of affairs is brought about, one of two things will happen. Sooner or later the Christian public will awake to the real nature of the issue—they will either reject the critics or they will reject Christianity; for in the present condition of the record it is impossible that a full acceptance of the critical position and an unfeigned belief in revealed religion can permanently coexist.

VII

THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

The value of an expert's evidence depends not merely on his exceptional acquaintance with the subject which he has made a specialty, but also on his capacity of concentrating attention and thought upon one particular element in an inquiry. This very habit, however, makes him impatient when others insist on taking a wider view than his own and giving due weight to considerations of a kind that he ignores. The very qualities, therefore, which constitute his value as a witness tend to unfit him for the position of a judge. Hence it is that no civilized community tolerates a tribunal of experts.

—*Sir Robert Anderson.*

The soundness of this principle is emphasized by every fresh attempt to ignore it. Witness the recent findings of the Board of Admirals who investigated the Dogger Bank incident.

VII

THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified. —*Isaiah. 43. 9.*

Now the question arises: What are the evidences adduced in support of the amazing conclusions involved in the critical theory? On an issue so vital, where so much that the Christian holds so sacred is at stake, the testimony ought certainly to be of the first class, undeniably competent, of a very high degree of probative force, capable of withstanding the most rigid tests, and so preponderating in weight as to admit of no alternative solution and to point irresistibly to but one conclusion. He ought not to be asked, nor ought he be willing, to reverse the judgment of two thousand years, simply upon the balancing of probabilities or even upon the presentation of difficulties and apparent discrepancies in minor points where, from the mere lapse of time, so much must of necessity be left in impenetrable obscurity. He ought not to confound a plausible explanation of a difficulty with the logical demonstration of a fact. Much less ought he to admit as determining

factors in the problem, surmise, conjecture, theory, opinion, or, indeed, anything short of actual proof in its own sphere as valid as that which he would exact as to the title of a plot of land, or the facts upon which he was to be charged with a pecuniary obligation.

It is, perhaps, contended here that this is setting up an impossible standard, and that it is unreasonable in an inquiry of this nature to expect proof amounting to a mathematical demonstration, or even such as would pass current as legal in a court of justice. That is to say, on a subject of the most momentous import the Christian is to surrender his faith in the authority of God's word, and to relinquish the brightest hopes ever held out to poor humanity, for reasons of a lower order than those required to prove a sum in arithmetic or substantiate the ownership of a bale of cotton. To the claim that it was the best that the nature of the case permitted, the response of common prudence would be: "Your best is not good enough."

For when we inquire as to the degree in which the considerations advanced by the critics satisfy the requirements above mentioned, we find that it is only by a loose and inexact use of language that many of them can be called proofs at all. We are told that no external evidence worthy of credit exists,¹ although the indications are that the biblical

¹ Driver, "Introd.," etc., 10th ed., p. 11.

account may not be so barren of external support as the critics would have us believe, strange to them as the assertion may seem to be. The same writer informs us that the case depends entirely on internal evidence.

The phrase is an imposing one: it has a comfortably satisfying ring about it, and it seems to import the ascertainment of facts by processes so exact as to leave no doubt and no uncertainty about the result. But what is internal evidence? It is one branch of what is known to the law as expert testimony. Its sphere ostensibly includes the determination of the date, authorship, composition, purpose, etc., of documents or works of literature from the data furnished by their structure, contents, or character. It really amounts to the opinions, or what might often be more appropriately termed the guesses, of the experts on the subject. The law rightly names it "opinion evidence," and places a very low estimate upon its value. It is only within a comparatively recent period that it has been regarded as admissible for any purpose. It has never held an assured position as an instrument for eliciting truth. In the Tracy Peerage Case in the English House of Lords (10 Clark and Finnelly, 184), where there was a discussion as to the genuineness of certain ancient documents, Lord Chancellor Campbell, in speaking of a certain titled expert, said:

I dare say he is a very respectable gentleman and did not mean to give any evidence that was not true ; but really this confirms the opinion I have entertained that hardly any weight is to be given to the evidence of what are called scientific witnesses. They come with a bias on their minds to support the cause in which they are embarked.

And subsequent legal history has not tended to impair, but rather to confirm and strengthen the views of this high judicial authority. Indeed, the comments of modern jurists on the subject, in the actual administration of the law, are frequently couched in terms less calculated to save the feelings of the experts. That it has a useful place of its own and a proper sphere is not to be denied ; but that place is a lower one and that sphere much more limited than the critics accord to its operation. Its function is at best adminicular—*i. e.*, in support, explanation, or corroboration of other elements of proof ; and when it is elevated from that comparatively lowly office, and the entire burden of a case is sought to be put upon it, then its inherent weakness becomes at once manifest.

Its usefulness in any event is precisely conditioned upon the presence of certain concurrent requisites. Where, for instance, knowledge of the language concerned is exact and comprehensive ; where a large outside body of authentic literature exists to serve as an admitted standard of comparison ; where there is substantial agreement as

to the antecedents and tendencies of the period which is the subject of inquiry, and where the contemporary history is fully known, resting upon an unimpeachable foundation of established facts, so that it may be used both as a guide and a touchstone, then internal evidence may with profit be resorted to in the absence of direct extraneous proof of the precise point in hand, and it may resolve difficulties and clear up obscurities, and may, perhaps, with a greater or less degree of probability, furnish grounds for passing upon disputed questions of authorship.

At its best estate, however, certainty cannot be predicated of its results. A notable instance may be found in the discussion which raged for more than a century over the authorship of the Junius letters. That was a case where, if ever, the process of deduction from internal evidence ought to be capable of establishment as a true scientific method. Every condition which would aid in furthering such a result was present. The text of the documents was beyond question, for the original manuscripts were at the service of the experts. The investigation commenced contemporaneously, a large circle participating in it, while the interest it excited was universal, so that the relevancy or the truth of every scrap of evidence could be at once tested by common knowledge. The historical and personal allusions in the letters

were of such a character and imported such intimate knowledge in certain directions as to confine the scope of the inquiry within a small compass. The literary style of the author possessed such strongly marked characteristics and was withal of such unusual ability and distinction as fairly to preclude the idea that this was his only essay in literature, thus, in effect, further narrowing the limits of the investigation. The indications in the letters of the writer's mental and moral qualities were numerous and illuminative. In short, every conceivable element favorable to a correct solution of the problem—philological, literary, historical, and personal—was present in profuse abundance. And yet, what was the result? Uncertainty so complete that more than a century later so sound a literary critic as the late Abraham Hayward writes: "The authorship of the letters remains a mystery, and *Stat Nominis Umbra* is still the befitting motto for the title page."

And if it be so in the green tree, what must it be in the dry? Contrast the foregoing with the conditions confronting the critics in their attempted application of the internal evidences furnished by the documents constituting the sacred record. The language itself belongs to a dead and buried past, so remote that its idioms and usages and the meaning of many of its phrases are largely matter of conjecture. As said by a renowned Orientalist,

"We know so little Hebrew that the simplest correction of a biblical text is a hazardous undertaking."¹ Even the vocalization of its words was for centuries preserved only by oral tradition,² while the grammar of the language did not become an object of study until the ninth century of our era. There is no other extant Hebrew literature of the period covered by the biblical record, consequently no outside standard of comparison; nor is there any Israelitish history save that which forms a part of the same record. There are therefore no extraneous facts to which we may refer either as guide or touchstone. Add to this the gulf of three thousand years which yawns between the critics and their quarry; take into account the scanty and inadequate indications which survive as to the social and economic conditions, the habits, the allusions, the daily life of that far-off time; then estimate the underlying probability of reaching any assured result in an attempt not only to reconstruct the history on lines radically divergent from the *prima facie* showing of the biblical

¹ Professor Margoliouth.

² It is worthy of note that while tradition is accepted as controlling in the matter of vowel pointing, no weight whatever is allowed to it on any other subject. To be consistent, the critics should take the consonantal skeletons and spell out the vocalization for themselves *de novo*—on strictly internal evidence. It is an exhibition of weakness on their part to use tradition for any purpose whatever, except perhaps as the derivation of an opprobrious epithet to throw at their opponents.

narrative, but also to separate the narrative itself into a chaos of fragments, identified and dated, written centuries apart in different countries by an anonymous host of authors, compilers, forgers, and redactors. The fabled "cocksureness of Lord Macaulay about everything" pales into insignificance beside the quasi-omniscience which assumes such an achievement.

Are the critics dismayed by the magnitude of the undertaking or embarrassed by the scantiness of the materials? Not a whit. They feel themselves fully equal to the task; and they are relieved by the paucity of the evidence. What your true critic most likes is a free field and no facts. Then he can produce really brilliant critical work, arranging his facts to suit his theory and adducing his theory to prove his facts.

The fallible nature of this kind of proof is exemplified in some curious results of the critical examination of the internal evidence drawn from the books of Moses. One of the supposed sources of those writings is the so-called priestly code. Some critics of the school most in favor to-day hold it demonstrated beyond a doubt that it is the latest portion of the Pentateuch, composed during or since the exile, more than a thousand years after Moses. Other critics of equal eminence, applying the same *apparatus criticus* to the same production, assert with just as much positiveness that it is the

oldest part, the *grundschrift*, or foundation writing of the whole. A document which at the same time exhibits marked signs of extreme age and equally marked indications of comparative youth, must certainly be a most extraordinary production.

One critic, again speaking of the same priestly code, commenting on the dry formalism of its style and its "incredibly matter-of-fact statements," says: "Everywhere we hear the voice of theory, rule, judgment." Its legends are "dry wood, cut and made to a pattern with compass and square."¹ Another critic of the same school regards the priestly writer as a gifted poet, who in his "vision of creation" gives us the opening stanzas of a great epic of humanity, colossal in conception and profound in insight.²

One critic (Dillmann) speaks of the priestly writer's style as "juristically precise and formal, its language somewhat stiff and monotonous"; another (Ewald) dwells on its "peculiar fresh, poetic air," its "perfection and beauty," its "lucidity and quiet transparency," and its "florid style of description," and says in particular that the epic strains above referred to "may serve as a clear specimen of all subsequent ones."³ It is probably reserved for some remote future generation to

¹ Wellhausen, "*Proleg.*," etc., p. 361.

² G. A. Smith, "Modern Criticism," etc., p. 93.

³ Sinker, "Higher Criticism," p. 43.

discover lyrics and pastorals concealed within the pages of "Abbott's Legal Forms" and "The United States Revised Statutes."

Instances of this kind, and they are by no means rare, give point to the remarks of Doctor Wharton, the great legal text writer :

Not only do they give us, however positive may be their assertions, probable proof as distinguished from absolute demonstration, but when we weigh their testimony we find that we have to add to the doubt incident to all probable proof a new set of doubts as to the authority of the several experts.¹

Professor Smith "points with pride" to the fact that a large body of critics, working on independent lines, recognizes the existence of four main sources in the Pentateuch, and argues therefrom the scientific character of the conclusions reached. But Dillmann, one of the critics cited, names three sources, and Strack, another German critic of eminence, identifies five ; and in any event the consensus of opinion is only as to their number, while, as above shown, there is wide divergence as to their date, origin, and significance ; so the agreement is not so intimate as to be startling.

Even in a narrower circle, where unanimity does exist, many will attribute it, not to the cause assigned by him, but to the fact that the critics are

¹ Wharton on "Criminal Evidence," Sec. 9.

adepts at the game of "Follow my Leader." Professor Von Orelli gives a much more probable explanation of the phenomenon than does Professor Smith. In his introduction to Herr Möller's recent work, "Are the Critics Right?" he says:

Nothing is more astonishing to me than the readiness with which even diligent explorers in this field attach themselves to the dominant theory, and repeat the most rash hypotheses as though they were part of an unquestioned creed.

If they plow with Samson's heifer the unanimity of the answers which they give to Samson's riddle, while it may be gratifying to themselves, is scarcely surprising to others. As well might we imagine the last of a flock of sheep claiming as a fact that, acting on independent judgment, the whole of the flock unanimously chose the same gap in the hedge as a more desirable way of entrance into the turnip field than the open gate. Bell-wethers are not confined to ovine circles.

VIII

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

It stands to reason that any process which professes to take to pieces the mechanism of a book and to assign its several component parts to totally different ages must be exceedingly precarious and open to very grave suspicion. Any one who should attempt to do the same for the great literary monuments of Greece and Rome would find but little favor. And it surely must be evident that the like process, when applied to the books of the Old Testament, cannot be less precarious or uncertain in its results.

—*Stanley Leathes.*

VIII

INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

They are their own witnesses.

—*Isaiah. 44: 9.*

THAT the evidence relied on by the critics is of the precarious character suggested in the last chapter is abundantly shown by the history of the higher criticism during the last hundred years. One hypothesis has arisen, has had its day of triumph and has fallen, only to be superseded by another and another, some borrowing features of their predecessors, but carrying them on to unimagined issues ; others rejecting most that had gone before and striking into entirely new lines—the “document theory,” the “fragmentary theory,” the “supplementary theory,” the “crystallization theory,” the “development theory,” and a host of others, some of them variants of earlier ones too erratic to range themselves under a descriptive title and therefore known by no name save that of their originator. And the same “internal evidence” stands sponsor for them all.

What can be said of the soundness of a line of reasoning which readily lends itself in succession

and with equal apparent conclusiveness in each case to such a jumble of incongruities as is represented in the foregoing enumeration? A class of proof sufficiently elastic to cover and "conclusively demonstrate" them all is surely a confirmation of the homely adage, "what is good for everything is good for nothing."

The truth is, that when there are no contemporary records to act as a check, and no possibility of a reference to extrinsic facts of any kind as a test of accuracy, internal evidence has been made to do yeoman service in support of all manner of inconsistent and mutually destructive hypotheses; but where there is opportunity to measure these theories by standards of known fact, the result has frequently been utter failure. An instance of this latter sort is given by Professor Margoliouth, of Oxford, in his "Lines of Defense of the Biblical Revelation." A document called the Cairene Ecclesiasticus was discovered between 1896 and 1900, and accepted by all the leading Hebraists as a work of the second century before Christ, the period during which the existing Greek and Syriac translations were produced. In reality, the professor states, it is shown to be a work of the eleventh century A. D., compiled from those two translations, and he concludes: "In differing about the date and analysis of Hebrew documents from a school which could be deceived for a day by this

document, and could spend a year in defending it, I do not seem to myself to be incurring any serious risk.”¹ And from the standpoint of common sense the professor’s confidence would seem to be justified.

To repeat, the determination, say, of the authenticity of documents on internal evidence from style, presence of time indications, etc., is a somewhat uncertain process. A not impossible case might be put which would make even a higher critic question the conclusiveness, if not the validity, of such evidence. Let us suppose a testator with an unsuspected liking for quaint expressions. He makes a holographic will devising to the critic a valuable estate in “free and common socage.” There is no proof of the testator’s handwriting, and the attesting witnesses die before him, leaving but secondary evidence of the execution of the will. That happens to be of an unsatisfactory character, and the court rules the critic out of his inheritance “on internal evidence,” holding that the will is not shown to be a contemporary document, the term “free and common socage” having gone out of use since the early years of the eighteenth century. But the response is: “That would not be common sense. No sane judge would put such a decision upon such a ground.” Precisely so. But what a higher critic would do,

¹ “Lines of Defense,” etc., p. 309.

may, has done in analogous instances, is another question.

A friend suggests that the illustration just given is not in point, because, first, the presence of an archaism in a document would be to higher critics no proof of antiquity, but the rather that it was inserted by a later hand for purposes of deception; and secondly, that none of them was ever known to seek an earlier date for a document when a late one was any way possible. And there may be force in these suggestions. Let us take an illustration to which there can be no such objection.

In the works of a great English author are to be found the lines :

You are their heir, you sit upon their throne ;
The blood and courage that renowned them
*Runs in your veins.*¹

According to the critical methods, these lines contain strong internal evidence that they were written after the promulgation by Harvey of his discovery of the circulation of the blood. And yet they were published when the latter was but a youth, before he had made the choice of medicine as a profession, while his celebrated discovery was not made known until the poet was in his tomb.

¹ "King Henry V.," Act I., Sc. 2.

Once more, in the works of the same writer these lines occur :

The strong base and building of my love
Is as the very *center of the earth*,
*Drawing all things to it.*¹

Internal evidence again, of the very strongest kind, that the passage was subsequent to the fall of the apple, which led the great philosopher to his conception of the modern theory of gravitation, inasmuch as it exactly states one feature of it. But Shakespeare died twenty-six years before Sir Isaac Newton was born, and nearly a century before the publication of his immortal "*Principia*." True, the movement of the blood in some sort may have been known in a vague and general way before Harvey, as also the effect of gravity before Newton, and the great dramatist's title to his seemingly prophetic utterances is secure. But carry the incident back to biblical times. Let Harvey and Newton figure as priestly scribes of the exile and Shakespeare as a pre-exilic prophet. Can any one doubt that the critics would have found in these two passages confirmation much stronger than holy writ either that Shakespeare was post-exilic, or that the unscrupulous redactor had been at his old tricks of interpolation, by which he projected late conceptions into earlier times? They

"Troilus and Cressida," Act IV., Sc. 2.

would be wildly wrong ; but must it not be admitted that it is a fair replication of many of the grounds upon which they base their conclusions ? The late Laurence Sterne once observed that some men rise by the art of hanging great weights upon small wires. If the science of the higher criticism had existed in his day, one would surely have thought that he had its processes and results in mind ; indeed, a plausible case might be made out that the aphorism quoted contains "internal evidence" that the "science" in question did exist and was referred to by the humorist.

The minute literary analysis to which every page of the Old Testament has been subjected by such critics as Canon Driver, for instance, may stand in the eyes of an admiring following as a monument to their erudition and industry. It may even be, as claimed by Professor Smith, one of the most thorough intellectual processes of our time, and when its results are "done in colors," a dazzling picturesqueness may be added to its other excellencies. This elaborate treatment, Professor Sayce explains, is rendered possible by the limited field in which the analysts work. He says : "It is not difficult to learn by heart every word and grammatical form in the Hebrew Scriptures, or to count the number of instances in which the same idioms and phrases occur."¹ But while the painful minute-

¹ "*Lex Mosaica*," p. 5.

ness of the process or its intellectuality, if you will, is apparent enough, what of its probative significance? Ancient Hebrew, Doctor French intimates, has little or no chronology, nor can early and late be with safety predicated of any phrase, or even word, that is not post-exilic.¹ Style and contents, therefore, must be the main if not the only reliance. And the idea that with these only for a guide, any critic or any number of critics, by any kind of microscopic dissection and inter-comparison of writings of vast antiquity, in a tongue but imperfectly known, can determine their authorship with such nicety as to assign the beginning of a verse to one writer, the middle to another, and the end to a third,² and can identify the second of two contiguous fragments as added ten years after the first,³ is a pretension so fatuous that in no field save the "science of the higher criticism" would it receive a moment's consideration. A level-headed man of affairs called upon to form conclusions as to any question affecting his politics, pocket, or pursuits with "internal evidence," similar to that put forward by the critics, as his only base for decision, would brush the tissue of cobwebs contemptuously aside as something too fantastic for a grown man to waste his time over.

¹ Valpy French, in "*Lex Mosaica*," p. 126.

² Sayce, in "*Lex Mosaica*," p. 4 f.

³ Sinker, "Higher Criticism," p. 71.

The successful accomplishment of such a feat as the critics claim to have achieved would tax the powers of the mystic spectacles by which the Mormon prophet deciphered and translated the "reformed Egyptian" inscriptions on the gold plates buried by the angel Moroni on the hill Cumorah.

A visitor at the sanitarium of a celebrated alienist was conducted through the grounds by an intelligent and entertaining guide, who discoursed in an interesting manner upon the various phases of insanity as illustrated by the delusions of the patients whom he pointed out, and whose peculiarities he described. In the course of his conversation he remarked, referring to a man who was stalking gloomily along one of the pathways :

"There is one of the strangest cases we have. That man is under the delusion that he is Alexander the Great."

"That is very interesting," said the visitor.

"But he is *not* Alexander the Great," continued his guide.

"Of course not!" was the natural response.

"But I have reasons for knowing that which you cannot possibly have," he persisted.

"Indeed, and how can that be?"

"I, sir, am Philip of Macedon."

It was not to be gainsaid that he, if any one, ought to be accepted as an authority on the subject of the identity of his famous son.

One is "tempted to conjecture" that, like Philip of Macedon, the critics "must have reasons for knowing, which we cannot possibly have." Esoteric sources of information inaccessible to the rest of the world can alone account for the telescopic and microscopic definiteness with which they parcel out, date, and locate the component particles—many of them are too minute to be called parts—of these ancient documents down to the last jot and tittle. The only wonder is that they have not discovered and supplied the names of the several *anonymi* "on internal evidence."

We are further told that the modern criticism of the Old Testament is based on the presence of "doublets" or duplicate accounts of the same events in the historical books;¹ and that a valid inference of separate authorship may be drawn from differences in style and vocabulary of these two-fold narratives. The professor gives an instance. He says: "The passages which use *Elohim* speak of him as *creating* the world, and talk of the *beasts of the earth*; the passages which usually employ the name *Jahweh* speak of him as *making* or *forming* the world, and talk of the *beasts of the field*."² Hence, the conclusion that the two accounts were written by different men, as it is inconceivable that the vocabulary of any one man

¹ G. A. Smith, "Modern Criticism," p. 33.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

would be equal to the strain of supplying the recondite synonyms cited !

It is an odd coincidence that the treatise from which the above passage is quoted contains at least one instructive example of the "doublets" mentioned. It too bears all the critical earmarks which are supposed to import a dual authorship—both statements deal with the same subject-matter, one speaks in the plural and the other in the singular number, one in the present and the other in the past tense ; the words used differ, the form and grammatical construction of the two are wholly unlike ; in the first, the facts are stated in two short sentences, in the second, the entire statement is comprised within one complex sentence, and there are even indications of redactorial additions, as well as of the presence of the two main "sources."

The "doublet" is as follows : In the second lecture on "The Course and Character of Modern Criticism," we read : "We may say that Modern Criticism has won its war against the Traditional Theories. It only remains to fix the amount of the indemnity."

In the third lecture on "The Historical Basis in the Old Testament" the statement is : "I said that the battle of modern criticism with the traditional theories of the Old Testament had been fought and won ; and that it only remains to discuss the indemnity."

Now, if the saying of the same thing in two different ways denotes dual authorship, then it is plain that these two accounts are by different hands. We may go further and say that there are strong reasons for supposing that the first writer is from the northern and the second from the southern kingdom. The indicia are too marked to be deceptive. The racial characteristics of the first are clearly apparent. The caution of the Scot and his liking for indirect statements are seen in the avoidance of the first person singular, and the use of the phrase "we *may* say"; the Celtic impulsiveness which leaps hastily to a conclusion manifests itself in the boast that the whole "war" is over; the capitalization of the names of the two contesting principles illustrates the Gaelic passion for prosopopeia; while its northern origin is even more strikingly evinced by the canniness and keen eye for the main chance, betrayed in its solicitude as to "fixing the amount" of the indemnity.

It is equally clear that the second half of the doublet saw the light south of the Tweed. Compare its blunt, dogmatic "I said" with the cautious "we may say" of its predecessor; note the comparatively modest term "battle" used by the matter-of-fact Englishman in his care not to go beyond the record in his claims, and also the lack of a direct statement as to who is the victor in the conflict; and, finally, the elimination of the commer-

cial element in the matter of the indemnity, he, no doubt, considering it more consonant with the dignity of the subject to "discuss" it, than to "fix its amount."

One is "tempted to conjecture" that the second account originally stood "a battle has been won"; but that the inevitable redactor seeing an apparent discrepancy between the statements of the northern and the southern writers, the one speaking of a war, and the other of only a battle, harmonizes things by the substitution of the definite, in place of the indefinite article; and further amplifies the second account with the detail "fought and," as well as the explanatory addition "of the Old Testament."

To the question why he confined his emendations to the latter document, leaving the first untouched, the answer is plain. It is simply a way he has. The redactor never acts as an ordinary man would under the circumstances; with him it is always the unexpected that happens.

This doublet by no means stands alone; and yet, "internal evidence" to the contrary notwithstanding, Professor Smith would doubtless resent the imputation that "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament" was a compilation.

IX

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCES

The modern historians have refused to call the books of the Pentateuch as evidence ; they have eliminated those "summaries" of the history which are overlaid on the historical books and we have accepted them. And then, when their own witnesses step into the box and are expected to bless the modern theory, they curse it altogether. And this by no forced cross-examination on the part of those who were to be confuted by them, but by spontaneous, straightforward statements ; and forthwith those who called them proceed to tell us that the evidence is to be taken with reservation ; for later additions have been made to the testimony, and these must be removed before we can get the true statement of the case. Nay, these prophets themselves, even when we get at their own words, are not to be relied on for matters of fact when they tell us that other teachers taught the same truth before them ; nor for their statements of history when they declare that their nation had been taught a better religion and had declined from it. Where is the fixed point and firm standard by which we are to reach the truth ? The historical books are to be corrected by the aid of the prophetic ; but where is the standard for correcting the prophetic books ? On what authority are these "insertions" to be removed ? By what guide are we to adjust the prophetic misapprehensions ? The only "fixed" thing perceivable is the theory itself ; the only standard is "strike out" or "I consider." For the rest, what may be called by admirers a delicate process of criticism, may appear to others uncommonly like a piece of literary thimble-rigging.

—*James Robertson.*

IX

THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCES

They have made void thy law.

—*Psalms. 119: 126.*

BUT we are told by Professor Smith that the criticism of the Old Testament is mainly historical; and that, although use is made of the argument from language and style, it occupies a subordinate and comparatively unimportant position, being "only corroboratory of a conclusion reached independently, and upon the evidence of the sacred history itself." And he warmly repels the charge that modern criticism is dependent upon the precarious methods of literary analysis, claiming to have amply demonstrated that the main conclusions of the critics are based upon historical evidence derived from the Old Testament itself.¹

It may be said incidentally that this is a strange assertion in view of the contents of such a book as Canon Driver's "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," which seems to be accepted by the prevailing school as an authoritative epitome of the "assured results of criticism." That book

¹ Smith, *Op. cit.*, pp. 52, 56.

in the main consists of just this precarious literary analysis, of which Professor Smith speaks so slightly, and to which he attaches so little weight. As said by one of its eulogists, "The Presbyterian Quarterly," "Every phrase, every clause, word by word, is sifted and weighed, and its place in the literary organism decided upon." Assuming that the philological argument is the negligible factor that Professor Smith makes it out to be, what was the distinguished Oxford professor doing? Killing time? Picking black oats from white ones, the device by which inmates of English penal institutions used to be saved from the dire consequences of enforced idleness? Surely, if nothing of primary importance was to be established by all this exhaustive dissection and analysis he has labored in vain, and spent his strength for naught.

It must in justice be said that Canon Driver does not concur with Professor Smith in his exalted opinion of the merits of historical criticism; nor does he share his views as to the uncertain character of literary criticism. He says in the preface to his "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament," "I readily allow that there are some critics who combine with their literary criticism of the Old Testament a historical criticism which appears to me to be unreasonable and extreme."

Which view is the ordinary man to accept?

Perhaps both ; and to agree with Canon Driver in his estimate of the unreasonable and extreme character of historical criticism ; and with Professor Smith in his views as to the little weight to be attached to results reached by the "precarious methods of literary analysis."

But we should not take Professor Smith's reference to the argument from style too seriously. In litigation it is frequently the case that a defendant, while denying that he is properly in court, or that jurisdiction has been acquired over him or over the subject-matter of the action, yet finds it desirable to contest some step taken by the opposing party. His counsel therefore appears "for the purposes of this motion only," and is thus enabled to effect his immediate object—opposition to some inconvenient application—and at the same time prevent his appearance from subjecting his client to the jurisdiction of the court, or indeed from having any binding effect outside the limits of that particular motion. One is "tempted to conjecture" that this denial of dependence upon literary analysis, in answer to the charges of the conservatives, is "for the purposes of the motion only" ; and that, notwithstanding this disclaimer, the "argument from philology" will, when occasion serves, be found bearing its full share of the burden of the critical case.¹ In fact, the very lecture from which

¹ As, *e. g.*, Driver's "Introduction," etc.

the above-mentioned *dictum* is quoted contains a passage wherein Professor Smith gives to the philological evidence a significance which altogether overrides and renders nugatory the historical testimony.¹ But that is an instance in which the latter tends strongly to uphold the truth of the biblical narrative ; so, probably, the critics would not consider it a case in point.

In support of the asserted reliance upon the facts of Old Testament history as a basis for the critical conclusions, we are cited to the existence of "doublets" of the kind referred to in the preceding chapter ; one from Genesis, others from Joshua, none from the books relating to the period covered by Moses' life and activity. As to the "doublets" in Genesis, their presence is in nowise derogatory to the claim of Mosaic authorship for the Pentateuch. The fact that, as to an earlier period, he used ancient records as the groundwork of his narrative, has, to the ordinary mind, nothing whatever to do with the authenticity of the history and legislation comprised within his own time, and with which he had an intimate personal connection. And certainly the idea that duplicate accounts of what happened after his death could have any bearing upon the integrity of the record of his own life is one which could occur to no one save a higher critic or a resident of Bedlam.

¹ Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 63, and note.

It is necessary at this point to inquire precisely what is meant by the allegation that the critical conclusions are based upon historical facts derived from the Old Testament itself, confining our attention for the moment to the scriptural narrative from the time of Samuel onward, at which time, according to the critics themselves, "we at last enter real and indubitable history."¹ Does it mean that we are to take it as a sufficiently accurate, chronological account of the events with which it deals, entitled therefore to credence as sober history? Are the facts therein stated, in their entirety, those upon which the critical theory is founded? Not by any manner of means.

In all the pre-exilic narrative, upon the critical hypothesis, there is not one word of history, in the strict sense of the term, from beginning to end. It is not even original tradition. Speaking of the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, Wellhausen says, "We are not presented with tradition purely in its original condition; already it is overgrown with later accretions." And these second-hand traditions, with independent narratives incorporated here, and offshoots and parasitic growths springing up there, "have finally been uniformly covered with an alluvial deposit by which the configuration of the surface has been determined."² Of course,

¹ Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 77.

² Wellhausen, "*Proleg.*," p. 228.

before this amorphous conglomerate can be available for critical purposes this "alluvial deposit" must be removed, the additions, offshoots, and parasites separated from the main narrative, and the whole sorted, dated, and appraised, such portions as fit into the scheme being retained, while the residue is "cast as rubbish to the void."

So that the "sacred history itself," upon which Professor Smith claims to rely, is that history excised, mutilated, and eviscerated, turned upside-down and inside-out, and robbed of every vestige of a claim, not only to divine authority, but to ordinary everyday human credibility. And this is the inevitable outcome of the process; for it must be borne in mind that it is of the essence of the critical position that, with exceptions unimportant so far as the early religion of Israel is concerned, these narratives were written at so late a date as to deprive them of any possible force as historical statements. Naturally, when "facts" are manipulated after the fashion indicated, the residuum can be made to prove anything and everything.

A typical example of this method of handling the facts is instanced, and its true character exposed, by Valpy French, in "*Lex Mosaica*." It is to be remembered that the exigencies of the theory imperatively demand that the tabernacle of the congregation as the precursor of the temple must be regarded as the invention of the forgers of the

priestly code—an afterthought ; something which never had any real existence. The Aaronic priesthood also, with its hereditary succession in the direct line, was, from the same necessity, the creation of later ages, Aaron himself being a fictitious person who, even at the time of the oldest writing, the so-called Jehovistic narrative, say five hundred years after Moses, “had not yet made his appearance.”¹

We nevertheless find direct evidence of the establishment of this tabernacle at Shiloh in the period covered by the book of Judges, it being there spoken of as the “house of the Lord at Shiloh” ; which is in turn identified with the “tabernacle of the congregation” and “the temple of Jehovah” in the first book of Samuel, at which point, according to Professor Smith, “we at last enter real and indubitable history.” It is spoken of in the seventy-eighth Psalm as “the tabernacle at Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men” ; and the critics cannot be heard to deny the Davidic age of that psalm, in view of the use they themselves make of the argument from silence. The prophet Jeremiah too, whose testimony one might suppose even the critics would accept, says, speaking in the name of the Lord, “My place which was in Shiloh where I caused my name to dwell at the first.” Surely, if any fact could ever be estab-

¹ Wellhausen, p. 354.

lished by biblical testimony, this fact was. But Doctor French shows what a small chance for life a fact has when it stands in the way of a critical theory. He says, "The critics dispose of the evidence. As the prototype of the temple of Solomon, Shiloh was the culminating fraud of the priestly code, a successful afterthought ; in fact, in the Judges 'there is no mention of the tabernacle. It has not yet appeared.' Having struck it out of the text, Wellhausen—surely not seriously—observes, 'So that the principal mark of the priestly code is wanting'!"¹

One of the references to the tabernacle in First Samuel, above cited, Wellhausen finds to be "badly attested, and from its contents open to suspicion." The latter clause of this condemnation is understandable, for the passage in question is decidedly inimical to the critical theory, and therefore from his point of view "open to suspicion." It is "badly attested" because it does not appear in the Septuagint, although, strange to say, in another place and with another point to make, Wellhausen draws an entirely different conclusion from a similar state of facts, deeming it probable that "the omissions of the Septuagint are due to an attempt to remove difficulties which has not quite attained its end."² An illuminative exhibi-

¹ "*Lex Mosaica*," p. 133 f.

² Robertson Smith, "Old Testament in Jewish Church," p. 431, 2d ed.

tion of the scientific exactness and unvarying stability of the rules governing "the most thorough intellectual process of the age." Why the unpurposed omission of the passage in question is not at least as reasonable an hypothesis as its intentional interpolation into the Masoretic text is not apparent. It is "open to suspicion" that if the passage had favored the critical theory its absence from the Septuagint would have formed no bar in the way of the critics founding an argument upon it, even if they would have thought it worth while to mention the fact of its omission. In a footnote Doctor French says: "Mr. Cave rightly suggests that the critics, to be successful, will have to relegate First Samuel to the days of Ezra."¹ He need be under no misapprehension; when the necessity is perceived the evidence will be forthcoming.

But further, in this same book of Judges, we find Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, ministering before the ark of the covenant (Judg. 20 : 28). "This," continues Doctor French, "is not a welcome passage to the critics. Wellhausen admits that it 'points rather to the priestly code,' but as this cannot possibly be allowed, he determined that the clause is a gloss."² Doctor French further says that Kuenen reluctantly allows it to have weight as testimony. He does not mention

¹ "Inspir. of the Old Testament," p. 269.

² "*Lex Mosaica*," p. 140.

that, before doing so, the latter takes care to rob it of all possible value by remarking: "It is yet to be determined how far this account is worthy of credit."¹ Colenso stigmatizes it as an interpolation which "has manifestly been inserted by some priestly writer who could not endure that the people should ask counsel of Jehovah except through the intervention" of an Aaronic priest.²

These instances have been dwelt on in some detail merely as specimens of the wanton and reckless manner in which the evidence of the "sacred history itself" has been warped and distorted and its probative value assailed by the "historical criticism" upon which Professor Smith lays so much stress. If but a tithe of the counts in the critical impeachment of the integrity of the holy Scriptures is well found, then they are valueless for any purpose. No sound conclusion of any sort can be based upon them.

But the illogical attitude of the critics in this, as in other matters, is well shown by Professor Robertson in some trenchant comments on Stade's "*Geschichte der Volkes Israel*," which are nevertheless of general application :

A remark may be made at the outset [says Professor Robertson] on the peculiar manipulation of the "sources" in his argument. Writers of Stade's school are never tired

¹ Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," Vol. I., p. 315.

² Colenso, "Lect. on the Pent.," p. 245.

of repeating that written documents give us certain information only in regard to the period at which they are composed. They declare at the same time that we have no authentic written documents before the eighth or ninth century B. C. These documents, therefore, ought only to be taken as evidences of the religious conceptions of that period, and yet Stade relies on them for proof of the religious beliefs of Israel at the time of and even long before the time of Moses. This he does, however, only when he finds elements giving countenance to his own theory, for the moment that a writer of this period gives his testimony to the biblical theory his evidence is discredited as a modern reading of old facts, or even a later interpolation of a redactor. To such straits are writers of this school reduced that they have to employ discredited works to build up their own theory.¹

Well may so renowned a critic as Dillmann, by many esteemed the ablest and most learned leader of the German critical movement,² say of Robertson that "he hits the nail on the head." For if the passage just quoted is not an exact and exhaustive characterization of the critical *modus operandi* it would be difficult to find one in all the literature of the subject.

Perhaps the full beauty of the method can be best illustrated by translating it in terms of actual present-day life. An action is brought in one of our courts to which the critic is a party. On the trial he first undertakes, elaborately and effectually, to impeach the credibility of the main, indeed the

¹ Robertson, "Early Religion of Israel," Vol. I., p. 228 f.

² Wace, "Bible and Modern Investigation," p. 45.

only, witness in the case, and then proceeds to support his own contentions by such shreds and patches of this discredited testimony as tell in his favor, rejecting the remainder as unworthy of belief or even consideration.

It is needless to say what would be the outcome of such a litigation.

Or, to vary the illustration, let us suppose a counsel learned in the law addressing the court somewhat after this fashion :

May it please the court : We desire to offer in evidence some records on which we propose to rest our case, but before so doing we would ask the attention of the court to some preliminary explanations as to our line of proof.

These records are of varying degrees of authenticity. Few of them, it may be at once admitted, were written by their reputed authors or were in existence at the time of their alleged date. Even those whose authenticity is conceded have been from time to time subjected to alteration and addition, excision and revision by successive editors of differing tendencies to suit the purposes of their several schemes. Some of the more important ones, which purport in large part to be contemporaneous records and which seem to set out a circumstantial and connected state of facts, apparently chronological and orderly in form, are nevertheless late compilations of different documents produced centuries apart, and finally brought together and consolidated into one instrument more than a thousand years afterwards. Nor are they to be taken as evidence of the facts therein alleged, according to their *prima facie* showing. On the contrary, paradoxical as it may seem, events therein recorded and relied upon as fact by the other

side we shall prove never to have occurred, and yet to be sufficiently existent to be adduced in support of our contentions. As, to cite an instance, the brazen serpent set up by Moses in the wilderness. This, we shall claim never existed, and yet we may find it desirable to bring it forward as evidence of the idolatrous beliefs and practices of the Israelites of the Mosaic age.¹

It will doubtless appear to the court that with the record in this condition no certain conclusions of any kind can be drawn. But we think that from the theory we have evolved as to the course which events must have taken during the period covered by our inquiry, and from our careful examination and analysis of the documents in question, and our deductions as to the spuriousness, and our consequent elimination therefrom, of the elements which conflict with this theory, we shall be able to present an intelligible, coherent, and harmonious state of facts "derived from the sacred history itself," which will commend itself to the favorable consideration of the court, to whose judgment we confidently submit our case.

Would he be allowed to get to the end of his screed? Can it be for a moment conceived that any one other than a born fool would have the temerity to go into court on such an errand and with such a plea?

It will probably be objected that it is absurd to suppose that a philosophical inquiry of the nature and scope of the one under consideration could possibly be confined within the rigid limits of and be conducted in compliance with the tech-

¹ Wellhausen, "*Proleg.*," p. 283.

nical formalities usual in a legal proceeding. And perhaps that is so. But it may be said that, notwithstanding the shallow satire expended upon the "red tape" and formalism of the law, if the investigation and discussion of the questions involved in this controversy could by any means be made even to approximate the orderliness and impartiality with which legal inquiries are conducted, with legal forms observed and legal rules governing the relevancy and competence of testimony enforced, and legal requirements as to the burden of proof and the weight of evidence insisted on, the process would attain a sanity and a sobriety which it has not hitherto exhibited and its conclusions would command a general respect immeasurably greater than has yet been accorded to them.

X

THE UNEQUAL BALANCES

Passages were quoted from Amos and Hosea as implying an acquaintance with the priestly code, but they were not such as *could make any impression* on those *who were already persuaded* that the latter was the more recent.

—*J. Wellhausen.*

The modern theory is strong in minute analysis, but weak in face of controlling facts. It will laboriously strain out a gnat in the critical process of determining the respective authors of a complex passage ; but when it comes to a real difficulty in history, it boldly swallows the camel and wipes its mouth, saying, " I have eaten nothing."

—*James Robertson.*

X

THE UNEQUAL BALANCES

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.
—*Deuteronomy. 25:13.*

THIS mutilation of the record and manipulation of the facts are not the only features of the critical programme to which a fair-minded man would naturally take vigorous exception. He complains, and has a right to complain, that the scales are not held true, even with respect to the scanty materials which the critics have left unchallenged as a valid basis for decision, and to the necessary conclusions deducible therefrom.

Arguments which are accepted as irresistibly cogent when used for weapons of attack, somehow seem to lose all their force when employed for purposes of defense. A rule is laid down and rigorously applied—pushed even to extreme limits—where an injurious inference is possible; but when a like rule is invoked which tends in the opposite direction, either it is ignored altogether, or airily avoided as without significance; or else a dexterously vague admission is made for purposes of rejoinder only, to be subsequently deprived of

all effect when the general question comes to be affirmatively considered.

For instance, in the book of Ecclesiastes there is a passage: "A bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." This, we are told, is a manifest allusion to the cranes of Ibycus;¹ although the certainty of the allusion is by no means as manifest to the ordinary reader as it was to Professor Momerie, the reference apparently pointing just as strongly to the modern device of using carrier pigeons as messengers. It was, however, plain to him, and the inference he draws is that the book could not have been written before the rise of the Greek legend in the fifth century. And many critical conclusions as to the late date of documents are founded on just such inferences.

But although it is pointed out that the books of the prophets are steeped and saturated in the language of, and throughout presuppose the institutions embodied in the law, which, from the necessities of their theory, did not see the light for centuries thereafter, the works of the critics will be searched in vain to find a frank acknowledgment of the fact, or any admission that they raise a somewhat formidable question.

These references are neither scanty nor ambiguous; on the contrary, they are abundant, precise,

¹ Momerie, "Agnosticism," p. 170.

and comprehensive. In his valuable work, "The Law in the Prophets," Prof. Stanley Leathes has collated the passages in question, and they are found to comprise the repetition of significant and distinctive phrases used in the several books of the Pentateuch, *and nowhere else*; plain and unmistakable references to historical incidents recorded there, *and nowhere else*; exact quotations of whole sentences of substantial import found in the Pentateuch, *and nowhere else*; and profuse, clear, and definite allusions to sacrificial and ritual language, feasts, and institutions, inhibitions, statutory enactments, and social regulations set out and prescribed in the Pentateuch, *and nowhere else*.¹

Now, it would seem that all this wealth of cumulative testimony presents an impregnable case for the priority of the written law. In any other field of investigation, a position supported by such a chain of evidence would be deemed to be established beyond a peradventure. And indeed, here, if the question were the other way about, and the exigencies of the critical case demanded that the law should precede the prophets, it would not be difficult to imagine the contemptuous scorn

¹ A compendious and judicious selection of some of the more important passages from the prophetic and historical books, with corresponding references to the Pentateuch may be found in Dr. A. J. Rowland's useful manual, "The Pentateuch," at pages 22-24. Cf. also the weighty considerations on this head advanced by Keil in his "Introduction to the Old Testament" (Eng. tr.), Vol. I., pp. 165-174.

with which the critics would overwhelm any one who dared deny or minimize the convincing force and effect of the concurrent lines of proof above enumerated.

On analogous grounds, slighter, however, in many cases, they have decided that the later prophets were close students of and intimately acquainted with the writings of their predecessors, of which they made free use, incorporating them in their own utterances without acknowledgment. Indeed, for reasons not hard to understand, they are astute to find evidence of positive quotations in mere general similarity of statement, fairly referable to identity of subject-matter and standpoint.

But these reiterated testimonies of the prophets to the pre-existence of the Mosaic law, touching as they do, directly or indirectly, almost every important element, and referring to every book of the Pentateuch with sufficient particularity to give point and certainty to the allusion, what effect do they give to them? Virtually none. For the most part, this phase of the subject is altogether ignored, or dismissed as unimportant, with here and there an incidental reference. Wellhausen dismisses it in a sentence of charming candor, and one which throws a valuable light on critical methods and processes. He says: "Passages were quoted from Amos and Hosea as implying an acquaintance with the priestly code, but they were not such as *could*

make any impression on those who were *already persuaded* that the latter was more recent." ¹

This mode of dealing with evidence, although even more radical in form, is akin to the one announced by the famous Western jurist: "I shall hold this case under advisement for about two weeks, but shall eventually decide it in favor of the plaintiff." It might well be called, "Wellhausen's Short and Easy Method with Traditionalists." Its effectiveness in burking and otherwise getting rid of inconvenient evidence is unsurpassed and unsurpassable.

Kuenen, however, is an exception. He deals with it in some detail, although without reference to many of the passages relied on by Doctor Leathes.²

Occasionally, as in the case of Canon Driver's "Introduction," an attempt, more ingenious than ingenuous, is made to forestall and discount the implications of these awkward facts. That writer in effect says that the "supposition" is that the *institutions* of Israel are in their origin of great antiquity; but that the *laws* respecting them were gradually developed and elaborated, and in their final shape are post-exilic.³ And he argues truly enough: "From this point of view, the allusions to priestly usage in the pre-exilic literature may be consistently explained."⁴

¹ "Proleg.," p. 11.

² Kuenen, "The Hexateuch," pp. 174-186.

³ "Introduction," etc., p. 142. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

Most assuredly. Indulge in suppositions enough, and let "supposition" and "demonstration" be regarded as convertible terms, and no case could be put which would be so wildly impossible but that it could be "consistently explained."

Assume that as it stands the Pentateuch is a dislocated and misleading puzzle-picture, and that to be of value it must be, as it has been, cut to pieces and readjusted on different lines by the critics, with all the joints and seams showing; *assume* that the first is the last and that the last is the middle; *assume* that with the art of writing known and practised for centuries, a creed, a system of morals, a code of laws, and a ritual came into being, and a history ran its course without written records or initial legislation; *assume* that centuries later some shadowy traditions of remote events, more or less historical, with some fragments of anonymous legislation were severally reduced to writing no one knows when, by no one knows whom, and finally gravitated to, and found a lodgment in the temple archives no one knows how; *assume* that centuries later still, long after much of it had become obsolete and inoperative through lapse of time and change of circumstance, this heterogeneous amalgam of myth, folk lore, history, law, and ritual was elaborately codified to give to the priesthood inapplicable instructions and to lay upon them out-of-date injunctions, obedience to

which was a physical impossibility ; *assume* that codification means, not what the lexicographers say, the arrangement and reduction to order of existing laws, but that it has an elastic signification and means indiscriminately the collection, retention, alteration, or abrogation of such old laws and the creation of new and radically different ones, with the invention of a "parenthetic framework" to fit ; *assume* that not one of the many scribes who had a hand in the piecemeal production wrote with a single eye to setting forth the facts as they were, but that each had ulterior, and generally sinister, motives, which motives are writ large upon the record ; *assume* that the residue of the Old Testament is of equal value, either as being of like dubious origin, or as having been subjected to similar transforming processes ; *assume* that the phrase "all critics are agreed" has the force of an axiom ; and *assume*, finally, that all these assumptions, instead of being mere guess and surmise, the projections of a vivid imagination, are sound conclusions based on valid premises ; and then, without doubt, "from this point of view" everything that militates against the completeness of the critical case "may be consistently explained"—consistently, that is, with the theory. That the explanation should consist with the facts as they were, matters little or nothing.

Our author proceeds : "They (*i. e.*, the allusions

to priestly usage) attest the existence of certain institutions ; they do not attest the existence of the particular document in which the regulations touching those institutions are now codified."

Laying aside for the moment "suppositions," critical and other, it may be said that this claim is based upon a curious misconception of the office and limitations of proof. Taking the word "attest" in its natural meaning of "giving testimony to," it is surely a revolutionary application of the laws of evidence to assert that these allusions do not furnish *some* evidence *tending* to establish the existence of the documents, to the contents of which they apparently pointed.

Now if there were to be found in the pages of some modern author a statement to the effect that of all cants the cant of criticism is the most tormenting, the ordinary reader would at once conclude that the author had read "Tristram Shandy," and that the passage in question was, although in abridged form, a quotation from that whimsical extravaganza. But according to the critical methods, this conclusion would be entirely unwarranted. It would merely exhibit "traces of pre-existing" views and indicate that at that or some earlier period there were prevalent—floating in the air, so to speak—opinions not altogether favorable to critics, critical methods, and criticism generally.

It is to be borne in mind that these references

in the "pre-exilic literature" are by no means confined to priestly usage; they cover a much wider field, as has been already shown. With the pentateuchal legislation, for instance, is incorporated a historical narrative, so closely interwoven that the history and the law cannot be riven apart without doing violence, not only to the record itself, but also to every rule of common sense and common fairness in dealing with historical documents.¹ Does the "supposition" evolved by the critic afford grounds whereby the historical allusions in the prophetic books "may be consistently explained"? Hardly in any event; surely not in the face of a perfectly obvious and natural explanation, and one which would be at once accepted as decisive in any other controversy where evidence and proof meant something more than forms which shift with every turn of the kaleidoscope.

And the foregoing is equally applicable to the case of the multitude of prophetic repetitions and quotations of distinctive pentateuchal words and phrases above referred to. Nor is it perceived how the critical "supposition" mentioned can avail, in any impartial mind, to nullify the cumulative testimony they give to the existence of a body of written law of which the prophets made lavish use, upon which they based their warnings and exhortations, and whose ancient date and

¹ Kuenen, "The Hexateuch," p. 32 (marg. paging, 35).

divine authority they themselves fully recognized, confidently counting on and appealing to a like attitude on the part of their hearers.

Doctor Driver follows with the citation of passages illustrating the references to "priestly usage," whose evidential force he seeks so industriously to destroy. The list, by the way, might have been indefinitely extended; but few as his references are, one of the examples he gives seems to be singularly inappropriate for the purpose he has in view. The case instanced is that of the vow of the Nazarite. He cites a passage from Numbers (which he assigns to the priestly writer) containing the law of the Nazarite; passages from Judges giving a concrete example of the law in operation, and one from Amos containing a definite allusion to one of the provisions of the law. And he says of these passages (*inter alia*) that they are proof that the institution in question was ancient in Israel, but not that it was observed with the precise formalities prescribed in the priestly code.

The prescriptions in Numbers, so far as they affect the votary himself during the continuance of his vow, are few and simple, while they are definite and precise. They enact that when one shall vow a vow of a Nazarite to separate himself unto the Lord he shall drink no wine or strong drink, and there shall no razor come upon his head, that he shall be holy, and shall let the locks

of the hair of his head grow until all the days of his separation be fulfilled.

Some centuries later than the purported date of this law we have an account of a Nazarite, Samson, given in the early annals of Israel. In the narrative all the above-mentioned prescriptions of the so-called priestly code are present, couched in the very terms of the law itself; the separation unto the Lord, the abstinence from wine or strong drink, the injunction to let the hair grow, with the prohibition of the use of the razor. Some centuries later still the prophet Amos complains of the children of Israel that although the Lord had raised up of their young men to be Nazarites, yet they "gave the Nazarites wine to drink."

Now it is difficult to see why this is not evidence, and pretty good evidence too, that both prophet and historian wrote in view of the Mosaic legislation quoted, and that this legislation then existed in its present form, inasmuch as both in the enactment in Numbers and the narrative in Judges substance, phraseology, and order exactly coincide. So that in this one instance at least the institution whose existence even the critics admit "*was observed with the precise formalities prescribed in P.*"¹

It is true that Samson did not present himself to the priest according to the "precise formalities

¹ Driver, "Introduction," etc., p. 143.

prescribed in P" to be observed upon the expiration of time or other sooner determination of the days of separation, but that was hardly his fault. After his locks had been shorn by Delilah, thus nullifying his vow and bringing it to an abrupt period, there can be little doubt that he would gladly have appeared before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation with the prescribed offerings. But unfortunately he was a prisoner, blind and bound, and making sport for the Philistines at Gaza. These provisions, therefore, being inapplicable to his case, the omission to mention them in the narrative in Judges, ought surely not to be held as evidence of their non-existence, although the argument from silence has, on occasion, been pushed by the critics to quite as extreme limits.

It is clear that the prophets would have had to quote the Pentateuch entire before the critics would admit their testimony in support of the claim that it existed in their day. It is doubtful, indeed, whether even that would suffice. Thus Doctor Driver notes many parts of the earlier books of Moses which are paralleled in Deuteronomy—in particular an important passage in the latter book, giving a list of clean and unclean beasts which to a large extent is verbally identical with one in Leviticus. And the inference he draws is, not as would naturally be supposed, that the one is a quotation from the other, but that it

is probable that both are divergent recensions of an unspecified and unknown original,¹ for whose existence there is not and never has been the shadow of a warrant. Could the force of ingenuity further go? At one breath they destroy the integrity of a document which has weathered two thousand years of attack, and at the same time create out of nothing a brand new "source," the tenor of which they may, no man forbidding them, change, augment, or diminish at will to meet the varying needs of their case as they arise.

The plain man, with his weakness for the obvious and the normal, stands helpless in the presence of such thaumaturgic dexterity as this. A certain document refers to John Smith, and what is said of him answers fairly well to the description of the man he knows by that name. But he is told that although John Smith is mentioned, it does not mean John Smith, but some other Smith whom no one has ever seen or heard of, and whose personality is as shadowy and unsubstantial as the John Doe of legal fiction. If the discussion were on any other subject, especially if it affected his personal welfare, he would at once insistently respond: "Produce your fugacious double or account for his non-appearance, or at least give us some proof that he ever existed at all and what has become of him." But in this forum where the voices only

¹ Driver, "Introduction," etc., pp. 144, 145.

of the pundit and the professor may be heard, he is awed into a silent, if dubious and unwilling, acquiescence by the twin bogies of science and scholarship.

A typical example of the manner in which the critics minimize by adroit handling the effect of adverse texts is to be seen in their treatment of the passage in Hosea which has heretofore been regarded as showing that in his time, at least, a substantial body of written law was in existence.

The Authorized version translates the passage : "I have written to him the great things of my law" (Hos. 8 : 12). The Revised version gives : "Though I write for him my law in ten thousand precepts" ; with the marginal alternate : "I wrote for him the ten thousand precepts of my law." Ewald, writing thirty years ago, before the exilic origin of the priestly code became the primary article of the critical creed, renders the passage (or his English translator does for him) : "I write for him by myriads my doctrines" ; and says that the genuine Israelitish, Mosaic laws at that time had been very generally reduced to writing.¹

Wellhausen, who cannot endure that aught but oral tradition and priestly praxis should be in existence at that early date, makes it read : "How

¹ Ewald, "Prophets of the Old Testament," Eng. trans., Vol. I., pp. 265, 271.

many soever my instructions may be";¹ and Driver simply refers to it as the "Torah" of Jehovah, which it was the office of the priests to inculcate and uphold.² George Adam Smith only mentions it in such a way as to suggest the inference that no such writings existed. His version is: "Were I to write for him by myriads my laws, as those of a stranger would they be accounted."³ For this reading he resorts to the Septuagint, of whose authors he had previously said that some of their mistranslations are outrageous, not only in obscure passages where they may be pardoned, but even where there are parallel terms with which they show themselves familiar.⁴ Such as it was, however, it suited his purpose better than the Masoretic text.

It is submitted that this is not the attitude of men who are endeavoring simply to get at the truth, but rather of strenuous advocates so dominated by their own prepossessions as in effect to say: "We have a theory to defend, and whatever appears to support it, is sure to be true";⁵ and conversely.

¹ Wellhausen, "*Proleg.*," etc., p. 57.

² Driver, "Introd.," p. 305.

³ G. A. Smith, "Book of the Twelve Prophets," Vol. I., pp. 278, 221.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Andrew Lang, "Myth, Ritual, and Religion," Vol. II., p. 364.

XI

THE ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE

The assumption that non-mention or silence is equivalent to denial, is groundless. Abundantly as "the argument from silence" is employed, no assumption is more thoroughly disproved by human experience. It forms an essential part of the denial of the Hexateuch narrative. Wellhausen and Kuenen never weary of saying that such a writer "knows nothing" of some matter. A rapid but not exhaustive glance over the pages of Kuenen's Hexateuch detects the phrase or its equivalent occurring thirty-four times. Occasionally it is added that there is silence where mention might be expected. But who knows what might be expected of any writer? Silence often occurs in connection with the best known facts ; and abundant cases in point are furnished by those who have given it any attention. Illustrative facts could be cited indefinitely. There is no more precarious assumption for an argument.

—*Samuel Colcord Bartlett.*

XI

THE ARGUMENT FROM SILENCE

Making the ephah small, and the shekel great.

—*Amos. 8: 11.*

THIS inherent vice of the critical method is nowhere more apparent, or more conspicuously unfair, than in the validity which it claims for and denies to the argument from silence according as it tells in favor of or militates against the theory which holds the field for the time being.

The nature of that argument is thus stated by Professor Margoliouth :

The argument from silence represents the following series of syllogisms. Had B existed in the time of the author A, the latter must have known of B. Had A known of B, he must have mentioned or cited B. But A neither mentions nor cites B. Therefore B did not exist in A's time.

And he comments thereupon in this wise :

It is clear that this argument involves two assumptions which are not always capable of demonstration. Human action is characterized by fitfulness, whence it is not absolutely certain that a man will perform an act which he may be well expected to perform. Hence, while knowing of B, he may for some unknown reason fail to mention B. Or,

though the chance of his having failed to hear of B may be exceedingly small, it is often difficult to deny the admissibility of such a chance.¹

Or, to put it bluntly, the argument from silence is not worth the paper it is written on. Sometimes the conclusion happens to be true, and sometimes not; but when it does, it is not because it necessarily follows from the premises. In other words, it is largely matter of guesswork; and when there is guessing to be done, most men prefer to do it for themselves.

But, notwithstanding the inconclusive character of this argument, and its consequent worthlessness from a logical point of view, great dependence is placed upon it by the critics, and sweeping conclusions are drawn from it. Indeed, there is scarcely a phase of the subject in which it has not been pressed into service in some form or other. Only, however, when it tends to give a fancied support to critical attacks on the integrity of the Scriptures; for all other purposes the critics themselves would be the first to recognize its fallacy.

Doctor Watson, in "*Lex Mosaica*," at page 286, comments on the frequency with which, in certain critical works, the phrase occurs: "The author knows nothing" of this, that, or the other institution or provision, the non-existence of which the critic is seeking to prove. He truly says that "the

¹ Margoliouth, "Lines of Defense," etc., p. 175.

phrase has the merit or demerit of combining fact with inference. The fact is, 'the author says nothing'; the inference is, 'he knew nothing because there was nothing for him to know.' " And he adds: "We may venture the statement that the formula 'the author knows nothing' has the nature of a *suggestio falsi*, and that 'we know nothing' expresses with considerably greater exactness the true facts of the case." Which would seem to be the plain common sense of the matter.

Many specimens might be given; a few representative ones will suffice. Thus, Professor Briggs asserts as one of the four main foundations of the critical position, "a silence in the historical, prophetic, poetical, and ethical writings as to many of the chief institutions of the pentateuchal legislation";¹ the inference being, of course, that no such institutions existed. Here, as we see, Professor Briggs and Canon Driver part company; the former treating the institutions and the legislation as inseparable, the latter holding that the institutions existed while the legislation did not. He is simply more cautious than his American congener, casting an anchor to windward in his attempt to offset the awkward implications of the passages considered in the preceding chapter—which passages (as Doctor Driver perceives) are a direct refutation of Professor Briggs' claim.

¹ Briggs, "Higher Criticism of the Hexateuch," p. 96.

Prof. Robertson Smith attaches equal importance to the argument from silence. His references are frequent and wide-reaching. Taking for granted the necessary assumptions named by Professor Margoliouth, his conclusions substantially cover the whole ground of critical controversy :

The law was as little known in Shiloh as among the masses of the people ; . . the Deuteronomic code was unknown to Isaiah ; . . the complete system of the Pentateuch was not known in the period of the kings of Judah, even as the theoretic constitution of Israel ; . . Deuteronomy knows no Levites who cannot be priests, and no priests who are not Levites ; . . and the Deuteronomic historical retrospect was silent about the priestly tabernacle and its ordinances, and ignored the whole series of revelations to Moses and Aaron on which the priestly system of Israel's sanctity rests ;¹

and many similar passages which might be cited.

Kuenen makes a novel use of the argument. He first creates the silence by deletion from the text, and then argues upon it. He says in effect that neither the prophets nor the older historical books know of the distinction between priests and Levites ; nor of the exclusive fitness of the " sons of Aaron." ² He admits that in 1 Kings 8 : 1, the priests *are* distinguished from the Levites ; but treats it as a mere clerical error, which he corrects,

¹ Robertson Smith, "Old Testament in Jewish Church," pp. 271, 355, 359, 360, 391.

² Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," Vol. II., p. 300 f.

wonderful to relate, by a reference to the Chronicler ; while on the very next page he says : " It is highly contrary to true criticism to side with the Chronicler in the conflict between these writings and the older historical books." ¹ Excepting, naturally those rare cases in which the Chronicler lends support to some critical view, in which event, as in the instance just quoted, their confidence in him is so absolute as to be childlike.

Driver and Wellhausen find the argument equally useful ; the latter regarding it as " nothing more nor less than the universally valid method of historical investigation." ²

Indeed, it seems to be an indispensable item in the critics' outfit ; and it is easy to see that their progress would be greatly hampered if not entirely hindered should they by any misfortune be deprived of its aid. But, as an argument, standing alone, what does it prove ? Absolutely nothing. The assumptions essential to its validity are in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred altogether unprovable, and in the hundredth case doubtful.

Their own high estimate of its value, however, has odd reservations. It is not a weapon which can be safely put into everybody's hands. It is only really sound when an expert critic needs it to patch out a case. Its use by a " traditionalist " ought

¹ Kuenen, " Religion of Israel," Vol. II., p. 301.

² " *Proleg.*," p. 365.

to be discouraged, if not strictly prohibited; he would be sure to draw some inconvenient inference from it. The book of Deuteronomy, for example, forged, as "all critics are agreed," in the reign of Josiah, about 620 B. c., is emphatic as to the one sanctuary and its requirement of the centralized worship of Israel thereat. The injunction is: "Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose, out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither shalt thou come" (Deut. 12 : 5).

It will be seen that the author of Deuteronomy, whoever he may have been, is silent on three important points. He speaks from the standpoint of an undivided Israel: "The place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes," is the language used. He "knows nothing" of the disruption by which Israel and Judah became separate and hostile kingdoms. He speaks as of a time when the place of the sanctuary had not been chosen; he says: "The place which the Lord your God shall choose." He "knows nothing" of Shiloh, "My place where I caused my name to dwell at the first" (Jer. 7 : 12). He "knows nothing" of the temple at Jerusalem, as to which God had said: "He (*i. e.* Solomon) shall build an house for my name" (2 Sam. 7 : 13). Therefore, according to the critics' favorite argument from silence, Deuteronomy was written before the revolt of the

ten tribes, before the building of the temple, and before the establishment of the "house of God" at Shiloh in the days of the judges. Of course it is not for a moment to be imagined that they would admit its applicability to a case like that. It is only when it attacks the integrity of Scripture that they regard it with anything like favor.

Other apt opportunities for its use are suggested by Professor Margoliouth in a numerous group of psalms containing date indications pointing to their collection in Davidic times, notably the Seventy-eighth, which epitomizes Israel's history up to that period and no further.

The professor says :

The psalmists who versify the sacred history must have known of the glories of the Solomonic era, and of the splitting of the nation, if they lived after the close of the monarchical period ; why, then, do they become vague after the accession of David or earlier ? If they belong to the period of the divided kingdom, why do we find no trace of the hostility which ordinarily prevailed between the two divisions of Israel, and no aspirations after reunion ? Why are Ephraim and Manasseh given an honorable place beside Judah and Benjamin ? The later we place the collection the stronger does the argument from silence become.¹

That Professor Cheyne, at any rate, sets no great store by it is evident, for with a serene disregard for the burden of proof and the one on whom it

¹ "Lines of Defense," etc., p. 189.

should properly rest, he decides for the late date of the entire Psalter on the ground that there is no evidence of the existence of any pre-exilic psalm—not even that furnished by the argument from silence. And his brethren of the critical fold are doubtless in substantial accord with him.

What reason there is in the nature of things why sauce for the conservative goose should not also be sauce for the critical gander the common man can never be made rightly to understand. But so the whole sorry process moves along, limping with unequal feet, carrying in its bag divers weights, a great and a small, with one measure to apply to attacks upon the Bible, and another to its defense, reducing the principles of logic to a nullity, and robbing all evidence of every iota of probative force. Of course, choosing their own forum and being themselves the judges of the relevance and weight of testimony, when it is to be emphasized and when ignored, adjusting the sliding scale to the exigencies of the immediate situation, they can “prove” anything and everything; but if at the bar of any orderly tribunal, where one rule obtained alike for the affirmative and the defense they should resort to their customary tactics, they would be unable to prove ownership in a dog case, even if they escaped a reprimand from the bench for disingenuous trifling with the court.

The concluding section of Wellhausen's "*Prolegomena*," being a reprint of the article "Israel" in the "Encyclopedia Britannica," gives a fairly detailed sketch of the history of Israel and Judah from the earliest times down to the fifteenth century of the Christian era ; and yet from beginning to end the name of Jesus of Nazareth is not once mentioned. Surely he was a Jew whose life and death were fraught with the most momentous consequences for Israel, and yet the current of the narrative embracing the period of his career flows on without even the suggestion of an event which stirred to its depths the life of the Jewish people, and deflected the course of their history for all time. What does the argument from silence prove in this case ?

XII

THE ARGUMENT FROM
NON-OBSERVANCE

Moses was the divine prohibitionist. Nine-tenths of his emphasis lies on the "Thou shalt not." But the point that pierces us in this revelation through Moses is that every "Thou shalt not" is a disclosure of what men have done, and are prone to do, and would like to do again if they dared. The commandments sound like a shouting from the mountain-top of the secrets of many hearts. After each divine word which says, "Thou shalt not," follows a human murmur which says, "But I will." . . .

Blot out the prediction of Christ, and Moses stands as an embodiment of failure—a leader who emancipated the nation and condemned the race ; the messenger of a divine law which was broken even while he was carrying it down from the burning mount.

—*Henry Van Dyke.*

XII

THE ARGUMENT FROM NON-OBSERVANCE

I have written to him the great things of my law ; but they were counted as a strange thing. —*Hosea. 8: 12.*

They have forsaken the Lord ; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel ; they are gone away backward. —*Isaiah. 1: 4,*

They have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the Lord their God. —*Jeremiah. 3: 21*

EQUAL, if not greater, importance is attached by the critics to the argument from non-observance. Indeed, it is one of the foundation pillars of their whole superstructure. The gravamen of the critical complaint against what they are pleased to term the "traditional theory" of the Old Testament is that it presents an irreconcilable conflict between the law of Moses and the history of Israel ; and one of the chief merits claimed for the latest phase of the "higher criticism" is that, for the first time, it brings the law and the history into harmonious relations.¹

Without going into details, or specifying particular instances, it will be sufficient to say broadly

¹ Prof. Robertson Smith's preface to Wellhausen's "*Prolegomena.*"

that this position is sought to be substantiated by showing that the course of Israelitish history from the time of the judges onward is throughout characterized, not only by a general, not to say universal, disregard of definite and fundamental institutions and provisions of the Mosaic law and ritual, but also by direct, open, and flagrant violations of the prohibitions thereof, and by the practice of a promiscuous and gross polytheism. The claim is that these features in the religious life of the people, pronounced as they are, and persisting as they do, even to the time of the captivity, admit of but one conclusion. That conclusion is that the Mosaic law, as we now have it, was not in existence before the exile; and that faith in the one and only God which has for twenty centuries been regarded as held from the beginning by the elect and faithful in Israel was merely a "conception" which slowly and painfully struggled into being well toward the close of the pre-exilic period.

It is not to be denied that the sacred history does set out a state of facts from which it might fairly be inferred that both Israel and Judah were guilty of the practices charged against them. The bulk of the nation did disregard Mosaic institutions; they were unmindful of the ten thousand precepts of the law, counting them as a strange thing; they did at the outset and incessantly violate its prohibitions, moral and ritual; and they

were inveterate idolaters, hastening after strange gods and forgetting their covenant with Jehovah.

Nor can it be questioned that these things, standing alone and without explanation, might raise a presumption in favor of the critical hypothesis that the pentateuchal legislation was not in existence, and that the great truth of the Divine Unity was not then known to them.

But the critics either preserve a discreet silence on, or in various ways minimize the force of the significant fact that concurrently with these unvarnished accounts of the misdoings of Israel, the historian from time to time characterizes this conduct, recognizing it as sin against light and knowledge, violative of their covenant with Jehovah, and a departure from the God of their fathers. Contemporaneous prophets too tell the same tale. Pointing persistently to the past, by line upon line, and precept upon precept, they reiterate exhortation, warning, rebuke, and threatening. They denounce both Israel and Judah, not for failing to advance along lines of progress indicated by successive prophetic utterances, not for refusing to embrace new truth as it is unfolded, or to obey new commandments as they are given forth from time to time by the hand of the prophets, but for *backsliding*, for retrogression from an earlier and a purer standard, for turning aside from "the old path, the good way," forgetting their Maker, trans-

gressing his covenant, and trespassing against his laws. And they make these appeals in the evident assurance that the facts upon which they are based will neither be unknown nor misunderstood nor denied by the people to whom they are addressed.

It would seem to be beyond question that these accompanying circumstances, characterizing and qualifying the narrative, put a new face upon the matter, exhibiting the facts in an entirely different light, and constituting a complete rebuttal of the presumptions out of which the critical theories are mainly manufactured. It is elementary law that when a party seeks to take advantage of an admission he is bound to take the whole of such admission as it stands, and is not at liberty to select the parts which please him while rejecting the remainder. He may not isolate facts from their context, but must take the statement with all its qualifications and explanations. Nor may he, while relying on the admission, impeach the authenticity of inconvenient parts of it without any other evidence than that they do not consist with his theory of the case. If the critics were held to this rule, and it is not to be denied that it is a salutary one, their whole occupation would be gone forever, and the "historical criticism" of Wellhausen and his following would become a relic of the past.

At its best, moreover, the argument from non-observance is a poor foundation on which to build,

as a modern instance or two will show. The history of England during the reigns of the Tudors and the earlier Stuarts presents to the student the spectacle of a people theoretically free, but practically enslaved,—at least so far as the certainty of their civil rights, the quiet possession of their property, and the inviolability of their liberty and life were concerned. Popular rights were invaded and disregarded; the property of wealthy merchants was confiscated under the form of “benevolences”; men of substance, and even nobles, were outlawed on the flimsiest pretenses so that their goods might escheat to the crown; and the life and liberty of all were at the mercy of the king’s caprice. As one of the engines of this oppression, a committee of the king’s council, anciently possessing legitimate jurisdiction over the behavior of sheriffs, was erected into a court of law to determine civil rights, the members of which being “sole judges of the law, the fact, and the penalty,” untrammelled by a jury, usurped “powers the most dangerous and unconstitutional” over persons and property, in the devising of means the most corrupt and iniquitous “to harass the subject and enrich the crown.”¹ This state of things continued without substantial betterment until, with the abolition of Star Chamber and other oppressive tribunals, the whole system of arbitrary exaction and

¹ Sharswood’s “Blackstone,” Book IV., pp. 266, 310.

injustice was swept away by the Long Parliament in 1640.

But, notwithstanding all this array of diametrically opposing facts, there exists a tradition, apparently fortified by documentary evidence, that four hundred and twenty-five years earlier, on the field of Runnymede, the mailed barons of England wrested from King John what, though in the form of a charter, was in reality a great code of laws,¹ one of whose provisions reads: "No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned or disseised or outlawed or banished or in any ways destroyed, nor will we pass upon him, nor will we send upon him, unless by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land." The story runs that eighty years later, King Edward I., sometimes called the English Justinian, solemnly ratified this code by statute declaring that any judgments thenceforth given "against the points of the charter should be undone and holden for naught"; and at that early date settled the model of distributive justice as it exists to-day.

Here we have, presented in its sharpest form, the famous critical "conflict between the law and the history." In the face of the palpable incompatibility of the undeniable historical facts here enumerated with this so-called thirteenth century legislation, can any one doubt that this is a clear

¹ Pollock and Maitland, "History of English Law," Vol. I., p. 150.

case of Wellhausen's "artificial repriming" over again ; a "dramatic setting forth as at the beginning of the history of ideals and principles which did not prevail for centuries thereafter" ?

This legislation belongs, at the earliest, to the period of the Protectorate ; and its promulgation is, without doubt, carried back into the remote past, merely to give the dignity of antiquity to laws which found no effectual expression in the history of the English people until the latter half of the seventeenth century. And yet there are benighted "traditionalists" such as Hallam and Blackstone, Freeman and Gardiner, who still insist that John and his barons signed Magna Charta in 1215, and that the statute "*Confirmatio Chartarum*" was enacted under Edward I. in 1297.

Or, to take another notable instance from the history of our own country : On the fourth of July, 1776, the first Congress of the United States promulgated with imposing solemnities the Declaration which formulated the principles upon which the new-born nation was to be founded. After the preamble, the first clause of this document begins :

We hold these truths to be self-evident : That all men are created equal ; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ; that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness ; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

But the history of the nation demonstrates conclusively that during the first century of its existence, it not only ignored every one of these basic principles upon which it claimed to be established, but it deliberately and affirmatively violated them under the forms of law, and engaged every branch of its government, legislative, judicial, and executive, in the maintenance and support of such violations. During most of that period, the nation denied in act what at its inception it had solemnly affirmed in word : namely, that all men were created equal, endowed by their Creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Not only was a considerable proportion of its population held in complete and abject slavery, bought and sold as chattels in the open market, and with no status as human beings in the eyes of the law, but this relic of barbarism flourished for near a hundred years, and needed a bloody war to bring it to a period. And even to this day the equality regarded as axiomatic by the Declaration is still but an abstract ideal awaiting realization in the far future.

May not the historical critic of, say, 2900 A. D., decide that the execution of such a document at such a time was a manifest impossibility, contradicted in its every item by every feature of the subsequent history of the nation? Or, again to borrow the critical catchword : "The law and the history are in irreconcilable conflict."

May he not say of the Declaration of Independence, using Wellhausen's own language as to the giving of the law upon Sinai, that

it has only a formal, not to say dramatic, significance ; that it is the product of the poetic necessity for such a representation of the manner in which the nation was constituted as should appeal directly and graphically to the imagination ; and that for the sake of producing a solemn and vivid impression, that is represented as having taken place in a single thrilling day, which in reality occurred slowly and almost unobserved !¹

In short, that it is a mere "reflection of the present cast back into the past" ; a spectacular portrayal, as at the birth of the nation, of conditions which were the gradual product of far later stages in its historical development. With just as much warrant may this claim be asserted in the one case as in the other.

¹ "*Prolegomena*," p. 439.

XIII

THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCES:
BABYLONIAN

We may now sum up the results of the latest discovery in Assyriology. It has forever shattered the "critical" theory which would put the prophets before the law ; it has thrown light on the form and character of the Mosaic code ; and it has indirectly vindicated the historical character of the narratives of Genesis. If such are the results of a single discovery, what may we not expect when the buried libraries of Babylonia have been more fully excavated, and their contents copied and read ?

—*A. H. Sayce.*

XIII

THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCES : BABYLONIAN

The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it. —*Matthew. 12: 41.*

To the outsider it would appear that the recent discoveries in Egypt and Babylonia had rendered untenable many of the grounds on which the critics had founded their attacks upon the authenticity of the Scriptures, or, at least, had called them in serious question, and that an open confession of that fact might be reasonably expected from them. But therein he would simply display his lamentable ignorance of the extent of their resources, and of the celerity and dexterity with which the critical camp is accustomed from time to time to shift its grounds, vociferously proclaiming the while that its main positions are in nowise affected. Premise after premise they abandon, usually preserving thereafter a dead silence as to the fact that they ever depended on them. But to their conclusions they cling tenaciously, never relinquishing them, except to embrace some other theory still more radically inimical to the integrity and authority of the word of God. It is impossible for them

altogether to ignore these records of the past and the witness they bear, so they meet them by endeavoring to evade and becloud the issues which they raise.

One critic remarks sapiently and complacently that "archæologists have made no discoveries which confirm the tradition that Moses wrote the Pentateuch."¹ Did he imagine, perhaps, that "traditionalists" were waiting in daily expectation that some industrious digger would unearth a tablet containing a receipted bill showing how many shekels Moses paid to the scribes for materials and labor in transcribing the Pentateuch, specifying the number of folios in order that there might be no doubt that the documents copied correspond in bulk with the traditional books of the law?

It is the merest commonplace to say that archæological discoveries have not proved that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. No sane man ever dreamed that they had done so. But they *have* exposed the worthlessness of many of the critical reasons for denying the possibility of the origination of those writings in the Mosaic age. They have shown history, exact and circumstantial, where criticism has seen but myth, tradition, and fiction. They have confronted with the "camels" of fact, those evolved by the Germanic inner consciousness. They have demonstrated that methods of "codifi-

¹ Sinker, "Higher Criticism," p. 27.

cation" which the critics have assigned to the post-exilic period as peculiarly characteristic of that age, were in active operation in the days of Abraham. And they have shown generally that wherever points of contact have been clearly established between these relics of remote antiquity and the Oracles of God, it has been but to add another witness to the fact that "His word is true from the beginning."

In the recent work of Professor Sayce, "Monument Facts and Higher Critical Fancies," that eminent Assyriologist, with the candor and impartiality which have always marked his utterances, has given in a popular and compendious form some results of archæological research so far as they bear upon the questions under consideration; and those who esteem valid reasoning upon established fact and the application of a sound scientific method to those questions, are earnestly commended to that little book. It would be presumptuous, as well as superfluous, to add to what has been there so nobly said; and that phase of the subject might well be dismissed with this reference, were it not that it seems proper to notice some critical comments on the facts with which Professor Sayce's discussion deals.

He shows, for instance, that the age of Moses was a literary age; contrary to the old-time critical contention that the art of writing was then

unknown, and that Moses, consequently, could not have written the books ascribed to him.

Doctor Driver in his "Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament" denies *present* dependence on the argument, and rather unnecessarily points to the contents of that volume in confirmation of his assertion.¹ Doctor Smith to much the same effect writes: "Nor do any of the arguments for the late date of the 'Hexateuch' rest upon a reason which, even if it were probable, is so impossible to prove." He thinks, however, it would be unsafe to conclude that the Israelites of Moses' time knew how to write.²

Of course, they do not now rely on that ground, and they are quite willing to have it forgotten that they, or their predecessors, ever did. But they certainly cannot deny that not so many years since, it was a valuable asset in the stock in trade of the critical copartnership. Even Wellhausen, to whom the English school owe substantially all that is fundamental and distinctive in their scheme, comes very near to a statement of the argument in its baldest form. On this very point he claims distinctly that the age of Elijah and Elisha was a non-literary one, and that although writing had been practised from a much earlier period, it was only in formal instruments, mainly

¹ "Introduction," etc., p. 158.

² "Modern Criticism," etc., p. 59 f.

upon stone.¹ How utterly wide of the mark this is, Professor Sayce has conclusively shown. But the English critics, according to custom, while abandoning Wellhausen's premise, hold fast to Wellhausen's conclusions.

In any event, the disclaimer of Doctors Driver and Smith misses entirely the point raised by the establishment of the literary character of the Mosaic age. That is, the inherent absurdity of the assumption that, with a literary atmosphere surrounding him on all sides, and with literary activities not only prevalent among the higher classes, but permeating every grade of society in the land of his birth and residence,² a man equipped as Moses must have been for the tremendous task which he successfully achieved, should not have been equal to, and should not have availed himself of the opportunity of preserving in permanent form by written records for the future guidance of Israel, the elementary constituents of the origin and history of a divinely called people, and the laws of a divinely constituted nation.

Again, it will be remembered, as stated in an earlier chapter, that Prof. George Adam Smith says: "It is on the presence of many 'doublets'

¹ "*Prolegomena*," p. 464 f. See also, Schultz, "Old Testament Theology," Vol. I., p. 25 f.

² "Monument Facts," p. 31.

in the 'Hexateuch' and historical books that the modern criticism of the Old Testament is based."¹ The authors of these doublets or two-fold narratives of the same event, were first called respectively the Jehovist and Elohist, and were represented in critical works by the symbols J and E. But latterly a custom has grown up of dropping the names Jehovist and Elohist, because of certain inconveniences occasioned by their use, from the critical point of view, and of substituting therefor the names of Judean and Ephraimite writers; thus while the original distinction on which "the modern criticism of the Old Testament is based" has vanished, the critics have still, in the new titles, preserved intact the sacrosanct initials J and E, which they frequently, from prudential motives, join together thus, JE.

With reference to these doublets, Prof. Robertson Smith says: "A clear case is the account of the flood. As it now stands the narrative has the most singular repetitions, and things come in in the strangest order. But as soon as we separate the Jehovah and Elohim documents all is clear."²

Professor Sayce shows, however, that in the Babylonian account of the flood, written more than two thousand years before the advent of the hypothetical J and E, the narrative exhibits the

¹ "Modern Criticism," etc., p. 33.

² "The Old Testament in the Jewish Church," p. 329.

very characteristics relied on by the critics to prove the composite authorship of the account in Genesis. So these ancient Babylonians too had their own variety of J and E to pester them. It is to be hoped they had no higher critics to separate the documents, and thus spoil their enjoyment of the Epic of Gilgames.

Now, in his "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament," Prof. G. A. Smith more than once mentions and comments on this Babylonian story of the flood.¹ And it is odd, to say the least, that he should be silent as to a peculiarity which was so manifest and so significant to Professor Sayce. That it should have escaped the attention of so careful an observer is unaccountable, for it is not a mere question of minor interest, but one of primary importance; and, as the case stands, reduces the hypothesis as to the divisibility of the Genesis documents, so far as that hypothesis is based on the double narrative of the flood, to a palpable absurdity. At least, that is the impression it would create on the mind of the ordinary man, accustomed to deal in a plain and straightforward manner with facts as they come before him, and alike ignorant and contemptuous of the finespun theories of speculative scholarship.

Another bone of contention has been the biblical account of Abram's rescue of Lot and his

¹ "Modern Criticism," pp. 60 f., 91 f.

family from the four kings under the leadership of Chedorlaomer of Elam, contained in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis. The critics have been unusually severe upon this chapter. To them it was utterly without foundation in fact ; not even worthy of inclusion within the "four main sources" of the Pentateuch, being, as Kuenen says, a fragment of a post-exilian midrash of Abram's life, of very recent date, however archaic it may be in form.¹ In short, that it was a scrap of more than ordinarily audacious fiction, interjected without perceptible reason into the legendary life of a man who was a myth anyway ; and that its incidents were "sheer impossibilities which gained nothing in credibility from the fact that they were placed in a world which had passed away."²

Its historic setting was declared to be incredible ; history "knowing nothing" of an Elamite supremacy in Babylonia, or of an empire on the Persian Gulf, which in that age had subject provinces so far west as Syria. Equally preposterous was the idea that at that distant date a military expedition from Babylonia to Canaan, such as is there described, could have been successfully prosecuted. The priest-king Melchizedek was a wholly fictitious personage, filling an equally fictitious office, created for the purpose of glorifying the priest-

¹ Kuenen, "The Hexateuch," p. 324.

² Wellhausen, "*Composition des Hexateuch's*," p. 311.

hood of Jerusalem and to justify their claiming tithes ;¹ while the name of the city itself was a gross anachronism, the place having been called Jebus until its capture by David. The names of the actors in the episode even were not genuine. Some of them were not personal, but place-names.² According to Professor Hommel, "a distinguished Orientalist long ago declared this chapter to be a fantastic grouping together of names which either belonged to some remote period or were expressly invented for the occasion."³

If anything could be more dogmatic in conclusion, or more categorical in statement than the various items of the "assured results of criticism" as to this passage of ancient history, it is difficult to see what form those conclusions and statements could assume. And so long as the voice of the inscriptions was silent and their messages remained undeciphered the critics held the position triumphantly against all comers. But archæology takes the field, and a more ignominious rout of subjective theory-building at the hands of patient gatherers of facts can hardly be imagined.

The names mentioned in Genesis were genuine, with real men behind them. Amraphel was king of Shinar, Chedorlaomer of Elam, Arioch of Larsa,

¹ Kuenen, *Op. cit.*, same page.

² Kuenen, *Ibid.*, p. 324.

³ Hommel, "Ancient Hebrew Tradition," p. 160.

and Tidal of nations, or nomad hordes, their reigns synchronizing with the life of the patriarch Abraham. The Elamite king was the overlord of the others at that precise period, holding Canaan, the land of the Amorites, as a subject province. That his western tributaries did rebel, as stated in Genesis, with the result that a punitive expedition was projected and carried into effect as there indicated, is inherently probable, and introduces into Babylonian history an episode which, as Professor Hommel says, "fits into the political circumstances of the period like a missing fragment,"¹ throwing a valuable light upon the knowledge of this remote epoch which we gather from the cuneiform records.

In pre-Mosaic days too, the royal city of Judah was known as Jerusalem, or Uru-salim, *i. e.*, the city of Salem, and one of its rulers speaks of his tenure of office in terms strongly reminiscent of the references to Melchizedek in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The story of these discoveries is graphically told by Professor Sayce in the little book above mentioned.²

¹ Hommel, *Op. cit.*, p. 192.

² Those who desire a more detailed account with the evidence set out at length are referred to the same author's "Higher Criticism and the Monuments," Professor Hommel's "Ancient Hebrew Tradition as Illustrated by the Monuments," Dr. T. G. Pinches' "Old Testament in the Light of the Historical Records of Assyria and Babylonia," and Urquhart's "Modern Discoveries and the Bible." See "New Biblical Guide," Vol. II.

And the critics? Oh, they are doing business at the old stand, vending the old wares with but slightly modified cries, serenely oblivious of the fact that those particular wares have been indelibly stamped shoddy, pinchbeck, and counterfeit.

Wellhausen sticks to what he said, "regardless," as the Westerner would elliptically put it. He is the orchid of the critical flora, and can live on nothing, "hoist in the air by his own waistband," to adopt the exquisitely elegant metaphor by which he characterizes the work of the Chronicler.

In his "Introduction" Canon Driver dismisses this chapter in six lines, with the mild concession that "the historical improbabilities of the narrative have been exaggerated," although to the ordinary man "demolished" would have seemed a more appropriate term. He admits the authentication by the monuments of the names of the four kings, moving them a few centuries further into the past to get them safely out of Abraham's way, and comments on the lack of monumental corroboration of the residue of the narrative;¹ thus showing that, however high his professed regard for the Old Testament, its statements must receive outside support before he can accept them. Ordinarily the verification of the historicity of a coherent account, in so far as the discoverable evidence came into contact with it, would raise at least a presumption

¹ Driver, "Introduction," etc., p. 15.

that the remainder was of like character. Not so, apparently, in the mind of a canon of the church with respect to the word of God.

Prof. G. A. Smith is almost as summary and much more peculiar in his treatment of the chapter. He too notes the lack of corroboration; but he considers that even if it were present it would not better the case for the truth of the Bible. For, on the strength of "some evidence," the nature of which is not specified, there would still remain for him the possibility of an exilic origin. Of course, when one avowedly prefers remote possibilities to confirmatory proof, contemporaneous in character, there is nothing more to be said.

He follows with a statement of what is perhaps the most extraordinary argument to be found in the history of dialectics. He says, "In any case this chapter cannot be used in the discussion of the critical conclusions as to the date of the four main constituents of the Hexateuch, for it lies outside them all."¹

This remarkable plea presents strong affinities to the device of the thin duelist who, when his fat opponent complained of the unfairness of the contest because of the larger surface he presented as a target, suggested that his shape should be chalked upon the fat man's body, and that all shots outside the chalk line should not count.

¹ Smith, "Modern Criticism," etc., p. 62.

The precise question at issue is whether the patriarchal narrative contained in the book of Genesis is history or myth. As it stands it is an integer. It has so stood for immemorial ages. Nor is there a scrap of external evidence that this was not its original form. In this narrative the incident under consideration occupies its appropriate place, chronologically speaking, in the account of the life of its chief actor, Abraham. Nor is there the slightest appearance of any incoherence between it and the rest of the narrative, or of its having been violently thrust therein so as to interrupt its orderly course. And when it is shown that contemporary records authenticate it in substantial particulars, and to a striking degree demonstrate its fidelity to the historical surroundings and the political situation of the time, it seems impossible to deny that that fact has a most important bearing upon, and, so far as it goes, tends to support the claim that the narrative of which it forms a part is based upon trustworthy documentary evidence, and not upon confused and discordant traditions reduced to writing one thousand years afterward. And the contention that this item of evidence may be stricken from the record and its probative force nullified because the critics have assumed that the Hexateuch contains "four main sources," and that it belongs to none of them, is simply bewildering. They may assume that it has four

sources or forty ; but that has nothing to do with the question of the competency and relevancy of this evidence and its bearing upon the historicity of the Abrahamic biography. Nor would such an assumption relieve them of the burden of answering it if the controversy were at issue in any other forum than one in which agreement with a theory is regarded as demonstration of a fact, and where hypotheses are accepted as the equivalents of self-evident truths.

XIV

THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCES:
EGYPTIAN

The narrators show themselves very familiar with the manners, the customs, and the ideas of the Egyptians. There is not a single detail which can be made to prove the contrary. A certain number of descriptions and references are astonishingly faithful and striking.

—*August Dillmann.*

The history of Joseph, even in its smallest details, has painted with the greatest exactness the conditions of ancient Egypt.

—*Georg Ebers.*

History fixes the exodus of Israel in the epoch of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and geography assigns it to the same date. The fact admits of only one explanation. The story of the exodus as it is set before us in the Old Testament must have been derived from contemporaneous written documents, and must describe events which actually took place. It is no fiction or myth, no legend whose only basis is folk lore and unsubstantial tradition, but history in the real sense of the word. We may rest assured, "criticism" notwithstanding, that Israel was once in Egypt, and that the narrative of its flight under the leadership of Moses is founded on sober fact.

—*A. H. Sayce.*

XIV

THE EXTERNAL EVIDENCES : EGYPTIAN

In that day shall cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan.
—*Isaiah. 19: 18.*

THE reliance of the critics upon the "internal evidences" furnished by the books of the Old Testament as the basis of their extraordinary conclusions is sought to be justified by Doctor Driver on the ground that no external evidence worthy of credit exists whereby the age and authorship of those books may be determined.¹ In a narrowly technical sense, this claim is, of course, well founded. There is no direct, contemporaneous testimony from the outside upon those two precise points. But it does not at all follow that such external evidences as we have are not germane to the subject, or that they are without value in helping toward a correct decision upon those questions, and may, therefore, be safely ignored as negligible factors in the problem. While they may not affirmatively support the "traditional" view, they may suffice to negative rather forcibly many "critical" theories, and so,

¹ Driver, "Introduction," p. xl.

although not proving the conservatives in the right, be potent enough to put the critics in the wrong.

Thus, to take one of the instances noted in the preceding chapter, the claim is that the biblical account of the flood originally consisted of two independent narratives, each with its own marked peculiarities, one written in the Southern kingdom by the Jehovist during the ninth century B. C., and the other in the Northern kingdom by the Elohist during the eighth century, which two accounts, peculiarities and all, were combined into one record by a redactor about a hundred years later.¹ The Babylonian inscriptions show that a thousand years before the age of Moses these two elements, the Jehovistic and the Elohist, with all their distinctive features, were contained in one narrative, viz., the account of the flood in the Chaldean Epic of Gilgames. So, while the external evidence did not establish the age and authorship of the Genesis narrative, it effectually demolished the theory of the critics upon that subject, incidentally throwing discredit to that extent upon the whole scheme of the composite authorship of the Pentateuch, as formulated, dated, and appraised by the latest school, and certified by them as among the most "assured results of criticism."

It must be admitted that the external evidences

¹ Sinker, "Higher Criticism," p. 70 f.

drawn from ancient Egyptian sources differ in character from those furnished by the Babylonian inscriptions, in that the latter contain direct references to the subject-matter of the biblical record which are absent from the former. But the Egyptian evidences are equally valuable, and it may be said equally decisive, in redeeming the patriarchal and Mosaic narratives from the charge made against them by the critics of being loose and uncertain traditions only partially committed to writing even in the days of the divided monarchy.

The course of modern research is making it increasingly manifest that the scriptural account of the sojourn in Egypt, from the captivity of Joseph to the exodus, reproduces the Egyptian life of the time with photographic minuteness and fidelity without an anachronism or a false note. Forty years ago Dr. Georg Ebers, who certainly cannot be accused of partiality toward the "traditional view," in the preface to his great work, "Egypt and the Books of Moses," said :

I offer, so to say, in spite of myself and yet voluntarily, to those who wish to close the gates against free criticism, many things which will be agreeable to them, for I show that the history of Joseph in particular, even to its smallest details, has painted with the greatest exactness the conditions of ancient Egypt.

And this verdict stands unreversed. All that the critics even have attempted to do on this head

is to explain away its necessary corollaries. In his "Life and Times of Joseph,"¹ from which work the foregoing excerpt is quoted, Mr. John Urquhart has followed the history of Joseph step by step with scrupulous and painstaking care, and has made it clear that not only in its broader aspects, but also in its most insignificant incidents, the story imports such intimate knowledge of Egypt under the foreign dominion of the Semitic shepherd kings, and the correspondences between it and the known facts of that epoch are so numerous and precise that no other conclusion is possible than that it is a historical document of the first class, of such a measure of contemporaneity as to enable its author to walk with assured step through the pitfalls and obscurities of that remote period without a lapse or an error.

The atmosphere of the story is Egyptian; the social structure is of the time and place; the usages and conditions of daily life quadrate with the facts; the political situation harmonizes with the showing of the inscriptions; the requirements of the court etiquette of the period are correctly observed; official titles are faithfully transcribed and the specific duties attached to the various offices accurately assigned; the narrative shows familiarity with current phrases and forms of

¹ "New Biblical Guide," Vols. II., III.

speech ; purely Egyptian words are incorporated into the text, needing no explanation to those who had been dwellers in Egypt, but meaningless to all besides ; the odd inversion in Joseph's question, "Is your father well ? Is he yet alive ?" (Gen. 43 : 27) is found paralleled in an ancient papyrus deciphered by Chabas ; undesigned coincidences unobtrusively present themselves, and there are throughout indications that the dominant race was non-Egyptian, and that the dynasty was that of the Hyksos. In fine, Urquhart demonstrates that every ear-mark of historicity is present, with no hint or suggestion to the contrary, and he illustrates and fortifies his position by frequent reference to and quotation from the works of Maspero, Lenormant, Brugsch Bey, and other Egyptologists whose authority none would dispute.

One quotation in particular from Brugsch may be noted. That author gives an inscription from a rock tomb which he assigns to the times immediately preceding the eighteenth dynasty, *i. e.*, the one in which the foreign dominion of the Hyksos was overthrown and Egypt restored to its native kings. The tomb was that of an official named Baba, the servant of a vassal king under Apepi, the Pharaoh of Joseph's times.

After setting forth his many virtues, Baba says : "I collected the harvest as a friend of the harvest god. I was watchful at the time of sowing. And

now, when a famine arose, lasting many years, I issued out corn to the city each year of famine." Commenting on this, Doctor Brugsch says: "The only just conclusion is that the many years of famine in the time of Baba must precisely correspond with the seven years of famine under Joseph's Pharaoh, one of the shepherd kings."¹ And to the truth of this conclusion high probability is accorded by the late Reginald Stuart Poole, of the British Museum, in his article "Egypt" in the "Encyclopædia Britannica."

Now it is idle to claim that an account which beyond question exhibits the characteristics above indicated is myth or folk lore containing only "a substratum of actual personal history" or oral tradition a millennium old before its reduction to writing. Doubly so is it when we are asked to regard it as mere patchwork tradition constructed on the instalment plan, with centuries between the various patches, and the whole subjected to the periodic onslaughts of an interminable succession of redactors. If it is not history, entitled to an honorable status and to sober credence as such, then that term can never be applied to any of the records of antiquity, and the entire history of the ancient world must remain for all time in remediless obscurity and confusion.

If this were an isolated question, uncomplicated

¹ Brugsch, "Egypt under the Pharaohs," Vol. I., p. 261 f.

by the necessities of the place assigned to this document in the general critical scheme, it is safe to say that the critics would never have been concerned to impeach its authenticity. But the system demands that its value as evidence must be impaired ; so, as it is impossible for them either to deny or to ignore the facts, it becomes necessary that they should resort to the favorite legal device of "confession and avoidance," thereby enabling them to admit the facts and yet "save the face" of the theory.

Wellhausen, referring to these narratives in general, admits that "many of them have a local color, which bespeaks a local origin."¹ There is an oracular profundity about this utterance worthy of the immortal Captain Bunsby himself. It may be safely left to speak for itself. It is probably unanswerable. Certainly, while it does the "traditionalist" contention no good, it can do the critical theory no harm ; which is a prime virtue in an admission.

On this subject at large, though not with special reference to the Genesis narratives, Doctor Driver says, "The biblical records possess exactly that degree of historical and topographical accuracy which would be expected from the circumstances under which all reasonable critics hold that they were composed."² Which, in turn, is just about what

¹ "*Prolegomena*," p. 327.

² "Introduction," Pref., p. xi.

might have been expected from Doctor Driver—namely, a supercilious reliance upon the great name to which his profound erudition and undoubted critical acumen have justly entitled him as his justification for a dismissal of the whole subject with his mere *ipse dixit*; and if the common people are not satisfied they ought to be.

Professor Smith does condescend to go into the question somewhat more in detail. He says:

The portrait of Egyptian life presented by the story of Joseph in the Jahwist-Elohish document has been appealed to, as proof that the writer lived at a time when Israel, from their long residence in Goshen were still familiar with Egypt. . . . But the life which the story of Joseph portrays was the life of Egypt not only in Joseph's time. In the same molds it persisted for centuries after the exodus.¹

An explanation this, which has about as many elements of probability in it as that of the burglar who, when detected rifling a safe in a house into which he had broken, explained that he was there looking for a lost family cat. The seventeenth dynasty, to which by general agreement Joseph's Pharaoh belonged, is placed, approximately, in the eighteenth century B. C. The earliest (Jehovist) account of Joseph's life is assigned to the ninth century B. C. And the claim that an "accurate and vivid description" of Egyptian life at the later

¹ "Modern Criticism," p. 63.

date would present an equally faithful representation of the conditions existing nine hundred years earlier is one which, to say the least, is calculated to make rather heavy draughts upon human credulity. The early epoch was one of Egyptian subjection to an alien usurpation—a fact which of itself would raise a presumption that the continuity of Egyptian life and usage would be thereby broken and features introduced which would serve to differentiate it, notwithstanding general resemblances, from subsequent periods under native kings. The immobility of the “unchanging East” is proverbial ; but that characteristic would hardly warrant the assumption that near a thousand years could pass away leaving no trace of its flight in the habits and customs of the people and no marks to distinguish its beginning from its close.

The facts, moreover, are against the claim. Canon Rawlinson conclusively shows that, instead of the life of Joseph’s time persisting in the same molds for centuries after the exodus, the direct contrary is the fact ;¹ and that while such a statement might have been justly made as to earlier epochs of Egyptian history, vast changes with far-reaching effects were already in operation during the eighteenth dynasty, long before the exodus.

He says :

¹ See also R. S. Poole, quoted by Urquhart, in “The Bible, its Structure and Purpose,” Vol. I., pp. 247 f.

The strength of Egypt had from the first consisted in its isolation and its unity. For centuries upon centuries the policy of isolation was maintained—foreign manners, foreign ideas, foreign gods, were either unheard of or studiously ignored. But with the accession of the eighteenth dynasty all this was changed.

Foreign wars carried the Egyptian arms deep into Asia ; foreign commerce was encouraged ; foreign prisoners were brought into the country ; foreign mercenaries were employed ; the “gilded youth” of the upper circles took to foreign travel.

As a natural result foreign manners crept in, the language was corrupted by a large admixture of Semitic words, the Pantheon was invaded by a host of Semitic or Scythic deities, and the old national exclusive spirit, sapped and weakened by these various influences, decayed and died away.¹

In the nineteenth dynasty too, while art and literature flourished to an unprecedented degree, the morals of the people underwent a decided change for the worse. The evils of over-taxation were aggravated ; unusual and inhuman punishments were inflicted ; men and women were stripped naked and subjected to the pain and indignity of the bastinado ; cruel customs prevailed in war ; captives were slain and mutilated :

Polygamy on a vast scale was introduced into the royal household ; indecency in apparel was common ; and the

¹ Rawlinson, “History of Ancient Egypt,” Vol. II., p. 208.

profligacy of the women was such as to become a commonplace of Egyptian novels. Altogether, it would seem that the acme of perfection in art was coincident with a decline in morals—a decline which combined increased savagery with advancing sensualism.¹

Later dynasties witnessed still more radical, even revolutionary changes, augmented in volume and accelerated in movement, invading every department of national life, until in the period to which the composition of the Genesis narratives is attributed, Egypt was but a shadow of its former self. And yet we are asked to believe that an account portraying Egyptian life in that decadent age would fit equally well the conditions existing centuries before !

Professor Smith further says that “under the monarchy Israel had many opportunities of becoming acquainted with it.” The picture which this suggests of those early “historical novelists” severally making trips to Egypt in the ninth and eighth centuries respectively to “imbibe local color” to enable them to verify and touch up the details of their story is an engaging one ; but it appeals more forcibly to the imagination than to the reason.

He further finds indications of late origin in some of the names given in Genesis. Here again he and Canon Rawlinson are at direct variance.

¹ Rawlinson, “History of Ancient Egypt,” Vol. II., p. 194.

For the latter says distinctly that the Egyptian words and names connected with the history point to the times of the Hyksos, citing Brugsch Bey in support of this view.¹ To the same effect writes Doctor Souttar in his recent work.²

The contention of Professor Smith is that "the Egyptian names Zaphnath-Paaneah, Potipherah, and Asenath belong to types of names which do not appear or are not frequent on the Egyptian monuments until some centuries after the exodus." Now, in the name of candor and common fairness, which does he mean? Never? or, hardly ever? If the latter, why confuse the issue by the interjection of a misleading alternative?

It would, in any event, be interesting to know how many men with such names as "Praise-God Barebones" and "Fight-the-good-fight-of-faith Pet-tengill" would have to be mentioned in the history of Cromwellian times before he would be convinced that names of that kind were known and used in the seventeenth century. One well authenticated example might suffice a disinterested man. One hundred would be too few to satisfy one who, for other causes, was bent on maintaining a contrary view.

¹ Brugsch, "History of Egypt," Vol. I., p. 265.

² Robinson Souttar, "Short History of Ancient Peoples," p. 197.

XV

THE QUESTION OF MORALS

There is no instance of an elaborate historical and legislative work having been composed with the object of confusing, if not perverting, a nation's traditions of its own history and its ancient laws ; still less of such a work succeeding in the attempt.

Most incredible, if not most monstrous of all is the supposition that such a pious fraud was committed at the instigation of the God of truth, and that the books which are its record and its instrument can be regarded as inspired by him.

—*Henry Wace.*

I have seen in the writings of men of less eminence in criticism than Doctor Driver such a smug sentence as this : "The charge of forgery will not be entertained by *those of us* who are acquainted with the literary customs of the East."

This naïve self-complacency and easy assumption of peculiar and exclusive acquaintance with Oriental literary custom must not, of course, be taken seriously by any one who desires to deal with these matters in a genuinely critical spirit. These gentlemen know no more about Oriental usages than other people, and they cannot be allowed to intermingle their personal preconceptions with the rigid processes of criticism. Neither Doctor Driver nor any one else has any adequate means of becoming acquainted with the literary usages and moral ideas of the time when the Pentateuch was written except by an unbiased investigation of the Pentateuchal writings themselves.

—*John Thomas.*

XV

THE QUESTION OF MORALS

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

—*Matthew. 7: 16.*

IT is pertinent at this point to inquire what place the Old Testament as reconstructed by the critics is to occupy in the Christian scheme of things. Up to recent times, the general consensus of Christian belief was that the two Testaments were indissolubly joined, and that together they formed one body of revelation, interdependent throughout, and informed by a unity of spirit and purpose which gave assurance that one divine life moved in and through and vitalized the whole. And while it was fully recognized that the older order was provisional and incomplete in character and content, and that its design was largely educational, being our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, yet his coming was not regarded as abolishing or superseding it as an integral element in the revelation of God to men, of which our Lord and Saviour was the final Word. He came not to destroy, but to fulfill. And the inspired record of the initial and preparatory stages in the unfolding of

the divine purposes lost no whit of its value or its authority by the appearance of Him who was the sum and substance of its every message. On the contrary, its meaning was thereby enriched and expanded, its truths illumined and its problems solved, while its abiding authority was confirmed once for all by the seal of his express sanction and approval. It was, and had been from time immemorial, accepted and revered as the divinely laid foundation upon which the Christian edifice was built.

If the critical estimate of the Old Testament is to prevail, can it any longer hold this, or any honorable position in the Christian system? Can it be anything other than a source of weakness, casting doubt upon the evidence of the divine origin of the Christian revelation, which evidence rested, in part at least, upon its fulfillment of the types and prophecies of the older Scriptures? Would not the mere instinct of self-preservation prompt the complete severance of the Old from the New, so that the latter might stand on its own merits, unembarrassed by any vital connection with the fallible nature, the impaired authority, and the unfounded claims of the earlier record?

This severance is not, perhaps, imminent; but it is approaching. As it is, the only idea of continuity involved in the critical concept seems to be that Christianity is an after-growth sprouting from

the decayed stump of Judaism, rather than that both law and gospel are, from Sinai to Bethany, one growth of one stem from one root, a tree of God's own right hand planting, the leaves whereof are for the healing of the nations. But this latter view is one which, the critics tell us, is no longer "tenable in our days."¹

And no wonder. If the Old Testament is what they say it is ; compiled as they say it was ; written when and under the circumstances claimed by them, with the motives they attribute to its writers ; then, the sooner it is decanonized and forgotten, the better.

If it were merely a matter of the perpetuation of honest tradition, however unverifiable or mistaken it might be ; if the various provisions of the legislation were truly assigned to the period and source of their enactment, or left unassigned and so stated ; if the history consisted of bare historical notes, fragmentary and incomplete, but faithfully transcribed from authentic materials ; and if the prophetic oracles, anonymous or of known authorship, were simply collected and preserved without alteration, addition, or annexation, however chaotic they might be as to form or arrangement, the case would be vastly better than that made by the critics' showing. Although even then the resulting record would be an insecure foundation

¹ Kuenen, "Religion of Israel," Vol. I., p. 8.

upon which to base a system claiming to be of divine appointment. But when to all this uncertainty the element of designed deception is added, the case becomes desperate indeed. The inevitable outcome of the critical process is :

1. That the record throughout is a deliberate and corrupt falsification of history, so that no man can take it upon its *prima facie* showing without being grossly misled.

2. That the documentary evidence, where it has not been manufactured entire, has been subjected from time to time to interpolation and manipulation in the interests of succeeding sets of schemes and schemers.

3. That the whole body of the nation's legislation, social, economic, and religious, is falsely attributed to Moses, who is further made to commit the blasphemy of asserting that it is a direct revelation from God, thus involving the Almighty himself as a party to the fraud.

4. That this fraud was carefully and deliberately worked out by the clique to whom its benefits and emoluments were to enure, conferring upon them the glory of descent from a man who never existed, with the right of hereditary succession to an office he never held, and clothing them with authority to lay upon the people oppressive imposts and obligations never before heard of.

Granting the critical premises, it would appear

to be a hopeless undertaking successfully to defend the Deuteronomic and priestly writers and redactors from the charge of conscious, intentional, and corrupt fraud in foisting upon the people sham Mosaic legislation to their own advantage, and in perverting the facts of the history so as to furnish a plausible background and to give an air of credible antiquity to their revolutionary innovations.

This question presents no embarrassing features to the German critics of the Wellhausen school. They content themselves with setting forth the methods of the biblical writers mentioned, without making any attempt to justify or extenuate them, or to relieve them of any odium which might possibly attach to such practices. For they are not concerned to find evidences of inspiration or any divine element at all in the Old Testament Scriptures.

It is far otherwise with the "Christian scholars" in whose hands criticism "does not banish or destroy the inspiration" of that book, but rather "presupposes it."¹ For, although they are at agreement with their German brethren upon all points of cardinal importance involved in this phase of the critical theories, they shrink from applying the only logical conclusion possible in the premises. If the conduct of these biblical writers is as stated by both English and German critics, it richly deserves all the scorn and contumely which the latter

¹ Driver, "Introduction," etc., p. xiii.

have heaped upon it. But the "Christian scholars" at least perceive the enormity of attributing to the Holy One of Israel the employment of such vicious media in the revelation of his truth to men. They, therefore, seek strenuously to evade the issue of moral obliquity which is inevitably raised. And they advance pleas in extenuation and justification which, in their way, are as extraordinary as the original charges which render them necessary.

So, while Wellhausen contemptuously refers to the Chronicles as "a tainted whole,"¹ Doctor Driver, at one with him in his estimate of the book, deprecates the idea that it was "the Chronicler's intention to pervert the history."² Nowadays, a man is presumed to intend the consequences of his acts—a presumption which is not only good law but good sense. Why it should have been otherwise in the Chronicler's times is not apparent.

Wellhausen, again, speaking of the Pentateuch as completed by the addition of the priestly code, describes the cautious Ezra as withholding its promulgation until the coming of an opportune time for the introduction of its radical innovations, which did not occur until fourteen years after his return to Jerusalem.³ Driver, on the other hand, virtually denies that they were innovations, or that

¹ "*Prolegomena*," p. 224.

² Driver, "Introduction," p. 533.

³ "*Prolegomena*," etc., p. 406.

the priestly code was "manufactured" by the priests during the exile.¹ This statement is hard to reconcile with one made by him a few pages earlier, where he says, p. 136: "The pre-exilic period shows no indications of the legislation of that code as being in operation." This creates an odd quandary. The priestly code was not in operation before the exile, presumably, therefore, not in existence. It was not manufactured during the exile. It appears full-fledged and complete immediately after the exile. Where, when, and how did it originate? The only alternative left open is manifestly that of spontaneous generation.

The explanation attempted by Doctor Driver does not better the case, but rather accentuates the contradiction. Rebutting the imputation of "manufacture," he says at page 143 that in its main stock "it is based upon pre-existing temple usage." If this means anything it means that the substance of the legislation was in operation in the pre-exilic period. Which statement does he desire his readers to accept, that on page 136 or that on page 143? They cannot both be true.

It is not easy to differentiate this treatment from mere literary thimblerrigging. The evident design is to uphold the critical hypothesis of the Babylonian origin of the "priestly code," and at the same time relieve the captive scribes from

¹ "Introduction," p. 143.

the odium of having there "manufactured" it. How, upon that hypothesis, the regulations as to the wilderness sojourn, the directions as to the tabernacle, its furnishings and service and the constitution of the Aaronic order can be anything else than a fictitious creation of the exile, without a shadow of fact behind it, passes comprehension.

Doctor Driver seeks to palliate the "free handling" of materials attributed to the biblical writers by invoking a so-called principle of interpretation to the effect that "some freedom was used by ancient historians in placing speeches or discourses in the mouths of historical characters."¹ Kuenen, elaborating the same idea, says that "it may now be accepted as proved that the discourses and laws of Deuteronomy were put in the mouth of Moses" by an author of the seventh century who "has made Moses himself proclaim that which in his opinion it was expedient" should be then announced and introduced. And he adds: "At a time when notions about literary property were yet in their infancy, an action of this kind was not regarded as at all unlawful. Men used to perpetrate such fictions as these without any qualms of conscience";² an excursus in casuistry which it would be hard to parallel, that is, if it is intended as a defense of the morality of the Deuteronomic

¹ "Introd. Pref.," p. xi., note.

² "Religion of Israel," Vol. II., p. 18 f.

author's action. In like manner it might be said that at a time when Thuggee still flourished in Hindustan the worshipers of the goddess Kali did not regard the wholesale strangling of victims as at all unlawful, and were used to perpetrate such murders without any qualms of conscience. However adequate this might be as an explanation of their attitude, it would certainly leave much to be desired as a justification of their morality.

Some critics along the same lines point to the alleged impersonation of Solomon by the author of Ecclesiastes, and to the practice followed by Plutarch and others of putting speeches into the mouths of their characters as evidence of the universal prevalence and the innocent intent of such a custom. But this is the veriest pretense at instituting a valid parallel. The cases are not even similar, much less analogous. To make the parallel at all warrantable these ancient historians would have to put into the mouths of their heroes not only speeches, but the promulgation of positive legislation whose charges and burdens it was their purpose to lay upon their countrymen, and of the avails of which they were themselves to be the beneficiaries.

The biblical writers, moreover, are charged with attributing utterances not only to Moses and others, but also to the Almighty himself. Surely the critics in their attempts at justification draw the

line at that? Apparently not. The practice, it is true, was not unknown in biblical times, but the ancient prophets were much more severe in their estimate of its moral quality and consequences than are the modern critics. The prophet Ezekiel says :

They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them; and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word. Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken? Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God. And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God (Ezek. 13 : 6-9).

Which estimate does the Christian prefer, that of the Hebrew prophet or that of the higher critic?

Even if it were proven that such loose methods obtained and were universally followed in the ancient world, so that each writer regarded himself as having plenary license to change, augment, or diminish the biblical records at will to suit present purposes, which license he freely exercised, it is not seen how that would better the quality of the records themselves. It might acquit him of a consciously evil intent; it must leave the writings ineradicably tainted with their original spuriousness

and falsity and therefore impossible as a revelation of divine truth.

The indications are, however, that the evidence of the prevalence of this low standard of literary morality exists only in the necessities of the critical theory. The author of Deuteronomy, at any rate, will have none of it, nor will he tolerate the thought that his words are to be at the mercy of every redactor whose "tendency" requires their modification or annulment. His strict and reiterated injunction is: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut. 4 : 2). If the critics are right as to the Deuteronomist's tampering with the earlier records, he must have been a singularly constituted person to imagine that the measure he had meted to his predecessors would not in turn be meted to him by those who followed after.

At a much earlier period too, it appears that "notions about literary property" were by no means so inchoate as the critics represent. In the ancient code of Hammurabi that famous legislator concludes his work by calling down the condign vengeance of nineteen different gods and goddesses and groups of gods and goddesses on any one who shall "change his word, alter his bas-relief, destroy his written name and write his own name thereon,

or cause another to do so.”¹ The rights of authorship under modern copyright laws could hardly be more stringently safeguarded.

On the whole, the case made by the critics for the mode of production, the laudable purpose, the innocent intent, and the intrinsic value of the records in question, is one which the ordinary man is likely to view with much suspicion. The facts seem to be against it ; it does not coincide with accepted views as to the constitution of the Oriental mind in its superstitious reverence for the thing written ; it is expressly negatived by the concededly rigid immobility of the Jewish character, and its intense conservatism and loyalty to ancient standards. It is utterly opposed even to the most rudimentary conceptions of honesty and veracity—qualities which, at bottom, are surely not affected either by longitude or the calendar.

This subject has received very gingerly treatment at the hands of the critics and their adherents. It is rarely brought into first prominence or fully considered in all its bearings. As a rule, its seamy side is kept sedulously in the background, and its difficulties are sought to be met and overcome by the statement that they are referable to the human element which all must admit is present in the Scriptures. Human element,

¹ Pinches, “The Old Testament and the Historical Records of Assyria,” etc., p. 517.

yes! But criminal element? A thousand times, no! A record which even lays itself open to the charge of fraud, impersonation, and false pretenses, as we understand those terms, can never be finally accepted by sober Christian thought as the conduit through which God conveys his truth to men.

The moral issue cannot be evaded. It will not down, but will insistently urge a solution consonant, at least, with elementary notions of right and wrong, of truth and falsity. All that the critics have hitherto done in this direction is to present explanations which are evasions, to offer excuses which are accusations, to postulate ideas the prevalence of which they have not proved, and to assume customs the existence of which is more than dubious. The excuses are an insult to common sense; the pleas in justification are an outrage upon common decency.

XVI

THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME

We have to look facts in the face. Men may make what private exceptions from their own theory they please; what we have to do with is this view of the formation of Scripture, in its principles and implications. And facing that, we have no scruples in saying that if we accept the conclusions of criticism then we have no longer an authoritative revelation. Our warrant for going to the whole world and offering pardon and renewal and eternal life on the ground of a divine covenant promise, foreshadowed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New, is taken away. The Bible is no longer the solitary, immediate unveiling of God, discovering a purpose, founding a kingdom in which humanity should reach its goal, and the meaning and end of all existence should stand clear. Judaism and Christianity have their true place among the ethnic religions, if on that level they are the best.

—*John Smith.*

Other knowledge I disdain,
'Tis all but vanity.
Christ the Lamb of God was slain,
He tasted death for me.
Me to save from endless woe,
The sin-atoning victim died;
Only Jesus will I know,
And Jesus crucified.

—*Charles Wesley.*

XVI

THE PRACTICAL OUTCOME

Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach ;
they have no delight in it. —*Jeremiah. 6:10*

IT is now about a generation since the various branches of the evangelical church in English-speaking countries began to be subjected to the influences of the higher criticism. For the past ten years that influence may be said to have been a dominant force, modifying, if not absolutely negating, old forms of belief ; necessitating the restatement of nearly every one of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity in such wise as to present them in aspects fundamentally different from all previous conceptions and formulations thereof ; shifting the points of emphasis and the seat and ground of authority in matters of faith ; tending increasingly toward a rationalistic basis and the elimination of the supernatural ; molding and coloring the utterances of classroom, press, and pulpit ; and so impressing its ideals and tendencies upon the whole congregation of Christian people as to force upon the least observant among them the consciousness of a radical change in the

spiritual atmosphere and life of the church, its attitude toward doctrinal standards, its conceptions of the conditions of experimental religion, and its relations to the outside world. It is, perhaps, not too soon to inquire whether, on the whole, these influences have been wholesome or harmful.

On the scholastic side of this subject the writer has and claims no qualifications to speak. A vast impetus has doubtless been imparted to the study of ancient Hebrew and cognate branches of learning; much exegetical skill and acumen developed; a large fund of curious information and some misinformation accumulated; the "historical setting" of many passages projected with great ability and some plausibility; and world-wide reputations for indefatigable industry, patient research, profound erudition, and brilliant system-building deservedly achieved.

But in his conception of the essential nature of vital godliness and its divinely laid avenues of approach, the importance of that aspect of the question has been greatly overrated. It is quite possible that the advantages acquired may have been purchased at too high a price; and that the resultant apotheosis of learning—a mere by-product, perhaps, of the higher criticism—may involve grievous disloyalty to Christ. Many devout Christians of the old-fashioned sort, forming not the least valuable constituents of the membership of

the organized church to-day, gravely doubt whether criticism, with all its achievements, has thrown one scintilla of light upon the spiritual content of biblical truth ; and they more than doubt whether any of its discoveries, or all of them put together, have ever been influential in bringing one unbelieving heart to a saving knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. They, rather, incline to the opinion that through its pursuit, and through the attempted philosophies and sciences of religion of which it has been the moving cause, the cross of Christ is made of none effect. They conceive, indeed, that the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, with all its antecedent stages and all its subsequent issues, is neither a science nor a philosophy ; that it cannot be confined within the limits of a philosophical system ; and that its principles are not amenable to scientific or philosophical processes, being, like all transcendental facts, insusceptible of final and complete analysis. They, therefore, are strongly of the conviction that criticism, science, and philosophy, as elements of primary importance in the inception, growth, and nurture of the Christian life, may safely be ignored, or at least that intellectual apprehension with all its incentives to human arrogance and pride ought of right to yield place to that nobler faculty by which divine truths are "spiritually discerned." ¹

¹ Robertson, "Early Religion of Israel," Pref.

They repudiate the notion that the eternal purpose of mercy and grace which God has pictured in his dealings with his ancient people and illuminated by the revelation of the gospel of his Son, must be seen through scholastic spectacles and the refractions of a university atmosphere before its true perspective can be perceived and its essential significance grasped by the millions to whom its messages of life are primarily addressed. They cannot entertain the thought that the sincere milk of the word must be strained through academic colanders before it is digestible by the class who in the days of our Saviour's flesh "heard him gladly."

And they would protest against the incipient recrudescence of the exclusive caste spirit, which is of the very essence of sacerdotalism, with its necessity for a professorial intermediary between the individual soul and its reception and assimilation of the truths of God, as vigorously as did their forefathers against the monstrous pretension that salvation was not of free grace and not to be obtained except by dropping good *guilders* into the proper institutional coffers.

They readily admit the legitimacy of the ancillary relations of learning and scholarship, but they are as prompt to resent any attempt on the part of those handmaids to usurp the position of mistress of the household of faith. "Thirdly, teachers,"

is Paul's assignment of relative priority ; and they would not willingly see these "ten thousand instructors in Christ" wrongfully elevated to the topmost seat.

The educational ideals of the day, and their overshadowing influence upon modern methods in Christian work they deprecate, as involving the vicious assumption that there is in human nature every element necessary to enable men to accomplish their own salvation, needing only the agencies of the classroom applied by properly certified tutors to bring it out. If, indeed, the inception and development of the Christian life depended upon correct mental operations, and were continuous with or to be admeasured by the breadth and vividness of our intellectual apprehensions ; then the pursuit of critical methods with all their correlatives and implications would not only be commendable in our leaders of Christian thought—they would be an imperative necessity for all. And this curious result would follow : The wise and the learned would partake of its gifts to the full, while the common people, the poor and the illiterate, would be turned empty away.

They believe that the precise contrary is the fact, and that through the gift and calling of God the Bushman with his vocabulary of three hundred monosyllables may as truly know and as effectually testify to the life-giving power of the engrafted

word as the decipherer of cuneiform inscriptions who can see in the God-given laws of Sinai only mutilated fragments of a forgotten and resuscitated Babylonian code.

In their view, the very highest type of Christian character, replete with every grace and abounding in all spiritual wisdom and endowment is possible of attainment, wholly irrespective either of the possession or the lack of education, so that one who never heard of the inductive method or of a logical process, may nevertheless be so deeply versed in the mysteries of the kingdom, and so fitted to impart spiritual gifts to others, as to be a duly commissioned ambassador of Christ, and a divinely directed teacher of the righteousness which is by faith.

Their conviction is that the most potent hindrance to the spread of Christianity and to the maintenance of a high quality of spiritual life in the church is not to be found in human ignorance of the elements of Christian truth, but rather in the obduracy of the human will and the alienation of the human heart ; in the rebellion, in short, of fallen human nature against the sovereignty and governance of God. And to overcome these resistive forces a mightier sword is needed than was ever forged in any collegiate workshop, or borne by any university don, how great soever may be the skill with which he handles the weapons of his

craft. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, will alone avail here ; and the efficiency of that instrument the critics are industriously seeking to impair, if not destroy.

Habits of accurate thinking, the polish of culture, the graces of form, the sense of proportion, the amenities and the refinements of life, may be, and doubtless are, acquired through the discipline of the schools ; but life itself, spiritual, divine, can only be imparted by the Spirit of God, pictured in old time by Jehovah's prophet as breathing over the dry bones in the Valley of Vision. And this is an agency which the high priests of modern Christian culture, in act if not in word, have suffered to sink into desuetude ; if, indeed, they have not discredited it altogether as the refuge of the unbalanced and the fanatic.

But Christians of the type mentioned steadfastly maintain the older conceptions of the office and work of the Holy Spirit in their most explicit form ; to wit, that men may, and actually do, receive the direct light and leading of the Spirit in answer to sincere and believing prayer ; that without his aid, humbly depended on and devoutly sought, the truths of holy writ are a sealed word, and will not yield up their secrets to the profoundest insight or the most penetrating analysis ; and that any method or system, whether sacerdotal or scholastic, which even looks toward independence

of this agency, or tends to the deposition of the Holy Spirit from his paramount place as Interpreter of the mind of God as set forth in the written word, or seeks through any other avenue than his convicting and converting power to bring men into the kingdom of Christ is a distinct and unequivocal departure from the faith once delivered unto the saints.

This departure they regard as having already taken place; and in their estimate the conditions existing in the visible church of to-day tend strongly to confirm that view. They refuse to be deceived by surface indications of prosperity. They are not impressed by the multiform activities of the church along social and economic lines, with its numberless societies and organizations. They regard the endless succession of church clubs and schools, reading clubs, debating clubs, dramatic clubs, athletic clubs, schools of social and domestic science, of industrial training, of civic study, and of secular education generally, as but sorry makeshifts for a lost gospel and a vanished power. In their view these institutions, some of them praiseworthy in the highest degree, belong primarily to the secular order; and the greatest measure of success in achievement along those lines may be, and very likely will be, coincident with spiritual barrenness and destitution of the most pronounced type. They conceive that the

mission of the church of the living God is other and higher than the improvement of material conditions or the amelioration of the social order ; and that the divine ideal and aim is in imminent danger of being swamped and lost sight of in the multitude of worldly activities to which it has lent itself. And they look upon the erection of costly church edifices with elaborate "plants," apparently on the department store plan, and the contribution of vast aggregations of wealth devoted to the carrying out of this varied programme, as but the tithings of mint, anise, and cummin, to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law.

For, side by side with all this show of bustle and activity—much of it mere empty dress parade, and most of it wholly irrelevant to the distinctive duty of spreading the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ—they note ever-increasing symptoms of a widespread and deep-seated spiritual declension. We seem, for example, to have reached an absolute halt in the matter of the numerical increase of the church. Population is mounting up by leaps and bounds, and we are standing still, if not actually going behind. The fathers are dying out, and the children are not taking their places ! And this, not because the standard of admission has been raised and the conditions of membership made more stringent ; for the direct contrary is the truth. To-day little more is required than a bare

willingness to "join the church," and in many cases even that is secured by attractions and inducements strikingly resembling the "gift enterprises" with which wide-awake shopkeepers tempt customers to their stores.

There is manifest, moreover, a lamentable falling away in the matter of the observance of public worship. Christians go to or stay away from the services of the sanctuary for much the same reasons which prompt men in going to or staying away from the theatre or the lyceum—the weather, the attractiveness of the programme, personal inclinations, and the like. Once the believer did not regard himself as having any choice in the matter; it was his duty to go, and if he neglected this duty, his conscience accused him of withholding due homage from his God. To-day he goes if he feels like it; and as often as not he does not feel like it. And if this is so with the believing units, what of the unbelieving masses? As we know, they simply will not go, and nothing in the way of sensational theme, or operatic performance, or magic-lantern show, will tempt them there. As they bluntly put it, they have no use for the church.

And with all this there is present to-day an all-pervading spirit of skepticism such as can find no parallel in all the ages of Christian history. There have been skeptics and skeptical periods before, but their manifestation has been largely confined

to avowed enemies of all revealed religion, leaving the great body of the church untouched. Now they are entrenched in the very citadel of faith, and its bitterest foes are they of its own household. As has been seen, criticism, keen, mordant, hostile, emanating from so-called leaders of religious thought, is seeking to sap the foundations of every distinctive doctrine of the Christian creed, to eliminate every vestige of the supernatural from the Christian records, to reduce the authentic remains of Christ's life and words to a few moral precepts, and to depend for the growth and perpetuity of the influence of Christianity over men upon the operation of what is at best an unverified and unverifiable working hypothesis which concededly fails to account for all the facts, but which they elevate to the highest rank, as a power holding exclusive sway over the whole realm of phenomena; a law embracing in its scope matter, mind, morals, and religion; a master-key to unlock all mysteries of life and being; and a universal solvent of every problem that can arise in the heavens above and the earth beneath and the waters under the earth; and which they apotheosize under the name of the law of evolution.

Can it be wondered at, under such circumstances, that our churches are honeycombed through and through with uncertainty and doubt, and have consequently drifted into such a stagnant

backwater of indifference that the eclipse of faith among us has ceased to be a matter of general concern? Materialism of the worst sort, *i. e.*, the practical, is rampant; things seen and temporal loom so largely and desirably, and things unseen and eternal seem so far off and so dubious, that for all practical purposes the motto of to-day is: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." And these are not mere isolated symptoms, but are so general as to stamp their features upon the time in which we live and to characterize it as pre-eminently the age of unbelief.

Some may question whether the condition of impotence into which the church of Christ has fallen to-day is fairly chargeable to the influence of the higher criticism, and the consequences which have followed in its train. In the writer's judgment, and he by no means stands alone in this opinion, there is little doubt of it. They seem well calculated to produce just such effects, and no reason appears that what is a sufficient is not also the efficient cause.

Two facts lend support to this view: one is neglect of the Bible itself; the other is disregard of biblical teaching.

The astounding ignorance, even among Christian people, of the contents of the Bible, as compared with the intimate familiarity with it which obtained only a generation since, is so patent as to be no-

torious. But why should we greatly wonder at it? Why should they concern themselves about the matter, so long as they are in doubt whether it is merely the literature of the ancient Hebrews, or the law of the living God that they are called upon to read? Who can blame them for suspending interest until the critics decide which part is the word of God and which is not? And this question is one which, Professor Briggs tells us, the higher criticism can never determine.¹

Nor is the modern disregard of biblical teaching on all great fundamental questions any less marked. Take, for instance, the change in the attitude of the religious world of to-day toward scriptural declarations as to sin, its consequences, and its remedy. There was a time within the memory of the living when the evangelical church was a substantial unit in recognizing sin as a deadly and a damning fact in universal human history, underlying and coloring all our conceptions as to the nature and destiny of man. It was regarded as infinitely hateful to God, and as meriting and entailing the profoundest depths of the divine displeasure and the stern infliction of the divine judgment. It was an evil so inveterate and desperate that to save men from its dominion and its doom God spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all. And with these tremendous truths

¹ Briggs, "Biblical Study," p. 220.

before them, ministers of the word shunned not to declare unto men the whole counsel of God, depicting in no uncertain terms the warnings of holy writ as to the doom of the impenitent, and with strong pleadings and tears exhorting sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

Now when we inquire into modern views upon those fundamental questions, we become conscious of a change so vast as to be startling. "This difference," says Dale of Birmingham, in a sermon on the forgiveness of sins, "is so great, it affects so seriously the whole system of the religious thought and life, that we seem to have invented a new religion." And this is notably true of the utterances of the advance guard of the new theology, who seem determined, as before stated, to fit Christianity into some niche of the Spencerian system, and to restate the gospel in terms, and only in terms, of the evolutionary theory; according to which sin is transmuted into a mere defect in the adjustment of the organism to its environment. And this same philosophy, by the agency of its twin demi-gods heredity and environment, reduces man's accountability for sin to an insignificant minimum; the impact of the iron hand of circumstance upon inherited qualities and tendencies amounting almost to absolute determinism, so that under its pressure the free will of man dwindles into the shadow of a shade.

This conception granted there does not seem to be any room for the belief that God has any strong resentment against sin, or against those who are guilty of it. And since his resentment is gone, his mercy goes with it, the forgiveness of sin fades into an idle phrase, and the humiliation, agony, and death of the Lord Jesus become a wanton infliction of useless suffering, an irrelevant intervention, thrusting itself without cause or purpose into the mechanism of the orderly processes of evolution by law. Truly, whatever else this so-called Christian philosophy may or may not have achieved, it has robbed the crucifixion of all meaning, and the atonement of all power.

These views prevailing, and it is not to be denied that they are on the increase, it is the veriest juggling with words to contend that of the gospel as set forth in the New Testament, and as conceived in every age of the church save the present, one shred or vestige remains. Sooner or later too, the common sense of the common people will detect the void behind the mask ; and they can never permanently content themselves with a vacuity.

XVII

CHRIST VERSUS CRITICISM

The Old Testament canon is accredited by an authority of which the New Testament is devoid. This is the authority of Jesus Christ himself.

—*George Adam Smith.*

No theory can possibly be true which conflicts with the direct teaching of Christ. This may seem to some a very needless truism; unfortunately, it is a very necessary reminder. We are prepared as Christian men to receive and welcome the fullest light of the new learning. We are not prepared to be dragged at the wheels of those who would give us a discredited Old Testament, an emasculated New Testament, a fallible Christ.

—*Robert Sinker.*

XVII

CHRIST VERSUS CRITICISM

Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me ;
for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how
shall ye believe my words ?

—*Jesus.*
JOHN 5: 46, 47.

By far the gravest of all the issues presented by the higher criticism is that which springs out of the relation which it purports to establish between our divine Lord and the Old Testament Scriptures. If the Lord Jesus is right in his estimate of those writings, then the critics are not only wrong but slanderously and traitorously wrong in that they impugn either his wisdom or his veracity and utterly set at naught his authority to the extent even of denying to his words the slightest weight as testimony. If, on the other hand, the critics are right, our Saviour is—what ?

This is a question which the Christian can by no means afford to leave unanswered. Nor can he be content with an answer which is an evasion or which fails at any point fully and squarely to meet the issue raised, for it is a matter of supreme importance and one which goes to the heart of things. It is well that he should have clearly in

mind the precise use that our Lord made of those Scriptures and the authority he accorded to them. He will then be in a position to judge whether the divine authentication and the critical condemnation of the Old Testament are not so utterly at variance as to be mutually destructive, so that he who holds the one cannot possibly accept the other. He may, perhaps, if he is given to the propounding of unprofitable questions resting in wiredrawn and casuistical distinctions, go further and ask whether any of the solutions offered by the "Christian critics" is sufficient to form a common ground whereon these opposing conceptions may meet and harmonize without derogation of the claims of our Saviour as to his person and his mission.

Our Lord, for instance, treats as historical facts the Noachian deluge with the saving of Noah and his house, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with the narrow escape of Lot therefrom, the appearance of Jehovah to Moses in the burning bush, the giving of the manna and the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, recognizing too in the last event a prophecy of the manner and of the saving purpose of his own death. The critics say that these incidents are, one and all, unhistorical, being mere blends of myth and second-hand traditions, worked over again and again, with no trace of discoverable evidence behind them.

He repeatedly speaks of Abraham as a real per-

son, the generic head of Israel, on one occasion in such a way as manifestly to point to the promise that "in him should all the families of the earth be blessed." The critics dispose of Abraham as a lunar hero, "the free creation of unconscious art," a fictitious character, belief in whose actuality had not, even in the days of Amos, reached the same stage as that regarding Isaac and Jacob, one critic, it is true, admitting a mysterious "critical reaction in favor of recognizing" his personality.

Our Lord authenticates the accounts of the miraculous preservation of the widow of Zarephath and her son, and of the cleansing of Naaman, the Syrian leper. To the critics they are but the "anecdotic chaff" with which the really valuable historical notes in the books of Kings are largely mixed; unhistorical traditions of "curious marvels" current in prophetic circles in the 9-8 century B. C.

He apparently treats the journey and mission of the prophet Jonah to the Ninevites as sober history, founding upon the facts of that history a rebuke to his hearers for their unbelief and finding in its strangest incident a prophecy in act of his own death, burial, and resurrection. To the critics it is not history at all nor was ever intended as such, being a mere post-exilic parable or allegory, borrowing some of its features from a Babylonian dragon myth.¹ The critic cited piously asks,

¹ Smith, "Book of the Twelve," Vol. II., p. 524.

“How long, O Lord, must thy poetry suffer from those who can only treat it as prose?” He goes on to insist that there is no attempt made to “record an historical conversion of this vast heathen city.” Christ says that the men of Nineveh “repented at the preaching of Jonah.” The two statements may be left to stand side by side.

In his great forecast of the signs of his coming and of the end of the world he expressly quotes and applies a prediction of the prophet Daniel, mentioning him by name. Criticism decides that there was no prophet Daniel nor were any prophecies uttered by him, and that the book in which they purport to be recorded is a religious romance of the days of Antiochus Epiphanes.

With respect to the attitude of our Lord toward the Old Testament Scriptures generally, it would seem to be needless to multiply instances. At large and in detail, by words as clear and unambiguous as language affords, he pays the fullest tribute to their genuineness and authenticity, their absolute truth, their abiding authority, and their divine origin. Repeatedly he assigns the authorship of the Pentateuch to Moses, whose legislative enactments he in turn identifies with “the commandments of God.” In his mysterious temptation in the wilderness the only answers he vouchsafes to the tempter’s pleas are quotations from the book of Deuteronomy. Of the law of Moses

he says: "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Again and again he asserts that these Scriptures prophesied of him, saying of them: "They are they which testify of me." Upon them, in part at least, he bases his Messianic claims, and to them he appeals as grounds for belief in him as the Christ of God.

Can the issue between the Lord Jesus Christ and the higher critics be more sharply drawn? Who is in the right and whose words are to be believed? Is it possible for the Christian to concur in the verdict of the critics without rejecting the testimony of the Lord that bought him?

That the antagonism suggested in fact exists is not denied, nor is there any ground on which such a denial could possibly rest. To the devout Christian this creates a startling situation. He has ever regarded his Master's slightest word as of the essence of the truth, as possessing supreme authority and as commanding his instant and unquestioning belief. He is now told that it is not only permissible, but requisite to a right understanding of the subject that he should reject that word on matters vitally affecting his Lord's authority as a teacher and his claims to divine Sonship, and that he must accept in place thereof *dicta* which have formed the stock in trade of every enemy of revealed religion from the time of

Porphyry onward. The Christian may well ask : Where is this process to stop, and at what stage may I be certified that the teachings of Christ are infallible and to be implicitly followed ? If he was in error as to the past, what assurance have I that he was not also in error as to the future ? If wrong in one point, why not in all ?

It will not do to say that his utterances as to the nature and integrity of the Scriptures are negligible and unauthoritative, but that his declarations regarding himself and his relations to the Father and to the believer are matters of faith to be received and obeyed by all who would become his disciples. For these two elements overlap, and are indeed so closely interwoven that they cannot be separated without the impairment of both. Our Lord too makes no such distinction. On the contrary, he continually finds in the one prophecy and proof of the truth of his statements as to the other. Nor does he entertain the delusion that those who deny the one may be expected to accept the other. He says : " We speak that we do know, and ye receive not our testimony. If I tell you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe when I tell you of heavenly things ? "

The suggestion is an intolerable one in any case, as an attempt to parallel the situation in actual life will show. A project is brought forward by

one who seeks to procure its general acceptance and to persuade men to pledge their action in aid of its execution. To effectuate his purpose and to secure the necessary co-operation he makes a series of representations. The truth or falsity of certain of these representations it is within their power to some extent to test by evidence. As to the residue no such possibility exists; it must be left to stand on the bare word of the promoter of the undertaking. On examination, they discover that as to the matters within their cognizance he is not to be trusted. Either he is wholly mistaken himself or he has knowingly misled them. But notwithstanding this impeachment of his credibility, he still claims their confidence as to the matters which are concededly beyond the range of their knowledge. On such a showing, how many followers would he enlist among prudent men, particularly if any important personal interests, financial or otherwise, were involved? And yet this is the position to which the critical theories reduce the several aspects of our Saviour's teachings.

Two pleas in avoidance are advanced: One is the theory of accommodation; the other that of the *kenosis*. But the attempts thereby made to hide the sinister significance of the "assured results of criticism" are evidently mere counsels of desperation. They impale the Christian upon

the horns of an unthinkable dilemma; the one impugns our Lord's sincerity, the other his infallibility. As to the first, its bare statement ought to condemn it. It is that he merely conformed to the common usage of the Jews without intending thereby to indorse their opinions, accommodating himself to the ignorance of his hearers and accepting current Jewish notions as to the Old Testament out of deference to prejudices which might otherwise be a bar to their acceptance of his message. Our Lord a trimmer? Setting his sails to the favoring breezes of popular favor? How exceedingly false and calumnious. Right in the teeth of the wind of their doctrines he held his course. Most emphatically it is not true that he accepted Jewish notions regarding the Scriptures. The Jews of his time held them, as overlaid, controlled, and even reversed by the traditions of the fathers—traditions which, then and thereafter, were revered by the Jews as possessing an authority equal, and in some cases superior, to that of the Old Testament writings themselves.

Not in one recorded instance did he fail to run counter to their prejudices on this subject. On the contrary, he sternly exposed and as sternly rebuked them, saying on one occasion, "Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Indeed, his ministry was one

long protest against "current Jewish notions," and his consistent opposition thereto was one of the moving causes which, humanly speaking, brought him to his death. With respect, moreover, to their true significance, the attitude of our Lord and that of the scribes and Pharisees toward these Scriptures were antipodal—in harmony at no one point, as his repeated denunciations of their perversions thereof abundantly illustrate.

But the excuse is an impossible one in any view. The idea that He who *was* "the Truth" could knowingly build upon a false foundation is one which no Christian ought for a moment to be able even to contemplate without abhorrence.

Nor is the theory of the *kenosis* any more satisfactory. On that head the claim is made that our Lord himself did not know by whom the Pentateuch was written, since he "habitually spoke in his incarnate life on earth under the limitations of a properly human consciousness."¹ The one direct affirmation upon which this claim rests is, of course, the oft-quoted phrase in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians in which our Lord is described as "emptying himself" (Phil. 2 : 7), although support is sought in other scripture to which reference will be made.

It is a frequent taunt of the new theologians

¹ Gore, "Bampton Lectures" for 1891, p. 199, quoted by Canon Rawlinson in "*Lex Mosaica*," p. 46.

of the critical wing, that "traditionalists," in violation of the principles of true perspective in theology, are given to the founding of important doctrines on isolated passages, as *e. g.*, the doctrine of chiliasm upon the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. But here the critics presume to dogmatize upon the profoundest mystery of the Christian faith—the union of the divine and human natures in the Lord Jesus—on the authority, not of an isolated passage, but of an isolated word in a single member of a passage, the preceding and following members of which passage characterize, explain, and limit the phrase in question, not only specifying the particulars in which this "self-emptying" was manifested, but also indicating the ethical lessons to enforce which was the apparent intention of the apostle's words. And full effect may be given to them all without resort to the gratuitous injection of an alien element which is in direct conflict with the plain showing of the gospel narrative on this very point.

If the violent divorcing of this one word from its explanatory context, and the baseless expansion of its meaning so as to cover a far wider area, do not constitute a flagrant infraction of the true rule of interpretation, which demands that all the clauses of a complex statement shall be read together and each part be construed as restricted and governed by the general tenor of the whole, then

it is difficult to see how such an offense could be committed.

In the face, however, of the many recorded instances directly and by implication attributing to our Lord supernatural knowledge, the meaning and scope of this one word is so magnified as to deny to him any knowledge, or any source of knowledge, save that which he possessed in common with other good men. And all this in the name of scientific exegesis. It is the abnegation of common sense and reduces interpretation to an absurdity. So far as its destructive effect on any real belief in the proper divinity of Christ is concerned, the most radical Unitarian could ask for no stancher advocacy of his position.

To go no further, the eschatology of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew, with its categorical statements as to the second coming and the last judgment, and its definite assignment of precise circumstance and order of event, is a complete refutation of the kenotic theory. The very passage in that discourse, on which the critics rely as distinctly and unmistakably indicating the human limits of our Lord's knowledge, points decisively in an opposite direction. The passage is : "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." What man, "speaking under the limitations of a properly human consciousness," would

dare presume to say what knowledge was or was not possessed by the angels which are in heaven, standing in the immediate presence of God himself?

The only way whereby this dishonoring theory can be maintained is to subject the Gospels to the treatment accorded to the Law and the Prophets. There are indications not a few that the critics are prepared to do even this, the result being, as well stated by Dr. John Smith, of Edinburgh, that "we have no longer an authoritative revelation, and our warrant for going to the world and offering pardon and renewal and eternal life on the ground of a divine covenant promise, foreshadowed in the Old Testament and revealed in the New, is taken away."¹

It is for the Christian (and it is to him, simply as such, that this appeal is addressed, and to none other) to say whether upon the whole case the force of the evidence adduced in support of the critical position is so overwhelming as to compel him to accept its conclusions. This will in some measure depend upon the value at which he appraises the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, whereof the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures afford the only authentic record. If it is to him the pearl of great price much more will be needed to induce its surrender than the mass of assumptions and conjectures on which the critical edifice

¹ John Smith, "Integrity of Scripture," p. 30.

is builded. If he holds it lightly, as a thing of little worth, but slight considerations will avail to form his excuse for an indifference which is in itself a negation. In the latter case the end of the process is not uncertain. There are half-way houses, but he cannot abide in them. By sheer momentum he will be borne inexorably onward and downward until he is brought to a standstill by the dead wall of naturalism, compelling him to relegate the Scriptures to their place among the literatures of the earth and to rank his Redeemer with the great teachers of antiquity, if, indeed, he is not banished from the realm of actuality altogether, as a mere culture hero.

If he must indeed travel this path the brave part would be for him to face the inevitable boldly and without delay, and with a sad farewell to a lost gospel, a buried Christ, an unknowable God, and a vanished hope, to embrace unaffectedly what Thomas Carlyle called "the gospel of dirt and everything from frogspawn," recognizing in the postulated lumps of protoplasm his ultimate ancestors, and bowing down to and worshipping the primeval fire-mist, the fount and origin of things, the creator and maker of us all, behind which there is—nothing.

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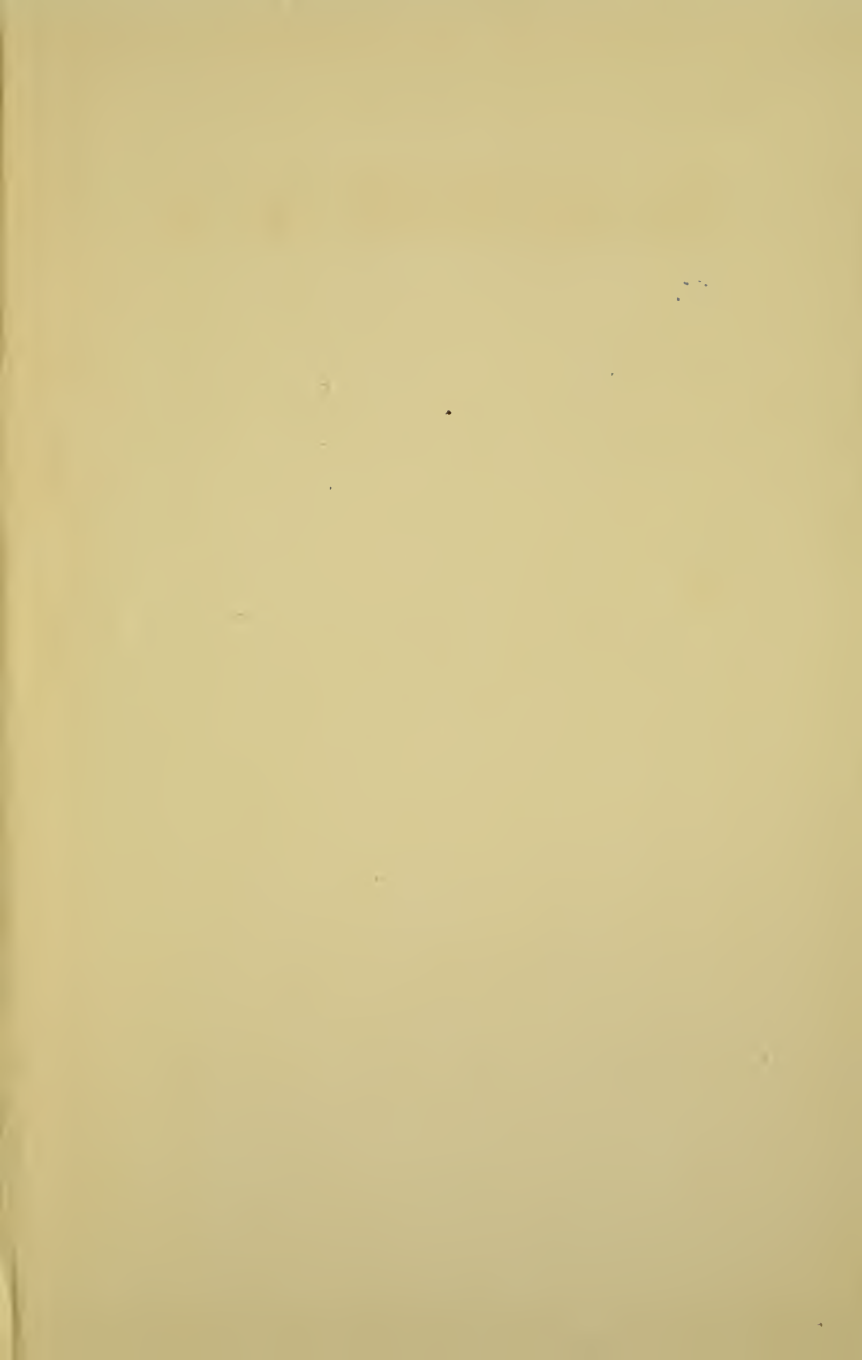
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